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PLUCK AND LUCK

STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

HARRY E. WOLFF, PUBLISHER, INC., 166 WEST 23D STREET, NEW YORK

No. 1352

NEW YORK, APRIL 30, 1924

Price 8 Cents

A CORAL PRISON; OR, THE TWO BOY HERMITS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN. *AND OTHER STORIES* By CAPT. THOS. H. WILSON.



The situation of the forlorn boys seemed well nigh desperate. The stones which they flung down fell with a terrific crash. But so dexterously did Shamo and his men shelter themselves behind the protecting crag that not one was hurt.

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PLUCK AND LUCK

Issued weekly—Subscription price, \$4.00 per year; Canada, \$4.50; Foreign, \$5.00. Harry E. Wolff, Publisher, Inc., 164 West 23d Street, New York, N. Y. Entered as Second-Class Matter, February 10, 1913, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y. under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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A CORAL PRISON

OR, THE TWO BOY HERMITS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN

By CAPT. THOS. H. WILSON

CHAPTER I.—On the Raft.

"Is there nothing in sight yet, Jake?"

"Nary thing, Bob; but don't talk so loud—I guess poor Louis is asleep."

"Best thing for him, poor little chap; he won't feel it while he's asleep. I only wish I could sleep a bit, too; but how's a fellow to sleep with his throat and tongue red hot, and all the skin off his lips as if he'd been drinkin' bilin' water?"

Then the two boys were silent, and stared haggardly with their sunken eyes at the clear, sunlit, cruel sky overhead, and the bright, beautiful, merciless sea all around them. Sky and sea, sea and sky. A tremendous solitude, a dreary and awful silence. No shade, no shelter; only one blistering, scorching glare, against which the tattered strip of sail-cloth spread out over the raft upon two or three broken spars was a frail defense indeed.

Far as the eye could reach there was neither sight nor sound of life. It seemed as if the world and all that breathed on it were dead, and only they left living, living on. Little Louis turned and moaned in his feverish sleep, and the two elder boys bent over him tenderly. It was but too plain that this was no refreshing slumber of repose, and that even in his dreams the worn-out sufferer was haunted by an ever-present sense of the misery that was devouring them all. The small, childlike features worked convulsively, the teeth were set, the thin hands were clenched as though in a mortal struggle, and the few French words that burst from his quivering lips came forth harsh and broken as if by a spasm of pain.

"He's dreaming about the fire," whispered Bob Harris to Jake Merritt; "do you hear how he keeps on saying 'Feu, feu?'"

The Massachusetts boy answered only by an instinctive shudder, for the very sound of the fatal word seemed to carry them back at once to the burning ship, from which they had escaped as if by miracle three nights before, though to all appearance the fire had spared them only to let them die by the lingering agony of thirst and hunger.

In a moment the whole scene was before them

again in all its terrible vividness—the fierce red glare breaking suddenly through the blackness of midnight; the roar and crackle of the flames as they coiled around the bulwarks, or darted their long tongues of fire in and out of the rigging, the crash of blazing spars as they fell thundering upon the deck, or hissed in the sullen waters below; the savage cries of the brutal sailors, who beat them back from the already overcrowded boats, the frantic struggle to piece their raft together before the flames whose hot breath came nearer and nearer every moment) could reach and devour them and their fight at last upon the few frail planks which were all that lay between them and death, with the ship one roaring blaze behind them, while the fire-lit sea all around was flashing into dancing ripples of flame by the scores of hungry sharks that were speeding up from every side toward the fatal glare which promised them a rich harvest of prey.

Bob dipped his burning hand in the cool seawater, and then laid it gently upon Louis' parched forehead. The cooling touch appeared to soothe the little sufferer, who murmured softly, "Merci, chere mere," as his dreams restored him for one moment to the loving arms that would never enfold him again. The remaining two of the five castaways were sitting at the further end of the raft, just within the shadow of the rude awning. One of them—who had the light hair, broad face and strong, large-boned frame of a North German—was playing a fishing line in the water (baited with a red rag from his tattered flannel shirt) in a listless way which showed he had little hope of success.

The other sat crouching with his elbows on his knees, and his chin propped upon his clenched hands, looking straight before him with a blank, unseeing stare that showed no remnant of that overflowing Irish drollery which Mike O'Brien had hitherto preserved under all hardships, and even under the constant ill-usage of the captain and crew. Suddenly Louis opened his eyes with a happy smile, which instantly faded as he looked around him.

"O ciel! it was only von dream, den! I tink ve all go ze shore, and it was si beau—so fine!"

But just then his wandering glance became fixed and piercing, and, stretching out his wasted hand, he cried excitedly:

"Terre, terre! Dere it is—ze verree land I did dream of!"

Bob and Jake looked eagerly where he was pointing, and started as they also thought they could make out land, or something very like it, in that direction, though Mike O'Brien and Karl Hoffmann, after looking their hardest, declared that they could see nothing. But after a long pause, during which the current bore them steadily toward the supposed land, a general shout told that there could be no further question about it. Not many miles to the southwest lay a small, low, thickly-wooded island, at one end of which towered a tall, spear-pointed crag, crowned by three palm trees.

"Guess that must be one of the Maldivé Isles," said Jake Merritt. "I know they're somewhere hereabouts, and we've been goin' right toward 'em all this while."

As they neared the islet cornfields and plantations began to show themselves here and there among the trees, behind which Jake thought he could distinguish houses. A few minutes later he announced that he was now quite sure of it, and that there appeared to be a good many of them. In fact, it was not long before the whole party could make out a number of small thatched houses of the ordinary Eastern type, half buried in rich tropical vegetation. All these signs of peace and comfort made the spot seem a perfect Paradise to the famished and wave-tossed castaways, who now gave free vent to their delight.

"Ven I do come on ze shore," said Louis, with a sudden flush of joy on his wan face, "I sall sleep for tree days!"

"And Oi'll make an iligant supper of thim cocoanuts, annyhow," cried Mike O'Brien with sparkling eyes.

"Und for me, I vall drink zo moch wasser as could float one boat!" added Karl Hoffman, licking his thirsty lips at the thought.

Nearer they came—nearer—nearer still—till at last they seemed to be barely four or five miles from the coveted land, every point of which was now perfectly clear. Then suddenly the great pinnacle or rock appeared to reel and quiver, the graceful palms grew blurred and dim as if seen through a wet glass, and the beautiful picture melted away like a dream, leaving not a trace behind.

"Och! what's this at all, at all?" cried Mike O'Brien, in dismay.

The reply came from Bob Harris's cracked and bleeding lips, in a voice scarcely audible:

"It's death to us all!"

CHAPTER II.—Through Darkness and Storm.

But our heroes soon had something else to think about. Hardly had the last trace of the mirage disappeared, when signs of evil began to show themselves on every side, such as even these young sailors could not mistake.

A hot, close, oppressive feeling seemed to fill the whole air, deepening the ghostly effect of the terrible silence, which was not like the stillness

of repose, but the grim hush that heralds the approach of some awful catastrophe. Far in the distance a gray, spectral haze was beginning to spread itself upward towards the setting sun, the light of which was growing ominously sickly and dim. Little by little the gathering dimness overspread the whole western sky.

Not a breath of wind stirred the hot, lifeless air, and beneath that deepening gloom the dead, glassy smoothness of the great waste of water looked weird and unearthly. The boys, who had sunk down hopelessly when the phantom island melted away, all rose from their places, as if obeying an order, and proceeded to make fast little Louis with ropes to the strongest part of the raft; having done which, they secured themselves in like manner. Not a word was spoken by anyone while they did so. They had no time to waste in talking, and no words were needed to tell what was at hand. But, quick though they were with their work, it was finished not a moment too soon.

Scarcely had the last knot been tied, when the sun plunged into the sea like a red-hot cannon-ball. Night rushed upon day. The darkening sky overhung the sea like a roof of black marble. Suddenly a blinding glare of lightning tore up the great mass of blackness from east to west. Then came a clap of thunder, like a hundred pieces of brass cannon all fired at once, and the tropical storm was upon them in all its horrors. Away they flew, like straws driven by a whirlwind, spray, and half strangled by the furious wind, which seemed to tear the very breath from their lips.

Up and down, up and down—now buried in a gloomy hollow between two great hills of water, now hurled far aloft on the foaming crest of a giant wave, which stood out horribly bright for one moment in the blue glare of the lightning. No rest, no mercy, no hope. Crash upon crash the great billows came leaping and roaring on. The lightning flamed and flared through the inky sky till it was all ablaze, and the sharp rattling cannonade of the thunder never ceased. The whole universe seemed one great battle. Five boys upon a tiny raft, in the full fury of a tempest which could have capsized a five-thousand-ton schooner like a rocking-chair. A few thin planks, a few twists of rope, against the whole of the Indian Ocean in its warth.

At time a dreadful sense of loneliness fell crushingly upon each of the forlorn lads in turn; as he thought that whatever might happen to him, even the comrades who were close beside him could give him no help, and that he was practically alone with the storm and the darkness. Again and again an awful fear crept over one or other of the boys that all his companions had been swept off into the hungry sea, and that he alone was left. It was only by stretching out his hand to touch them that he could make sure of their being still there; for the keenest sight was powerless against that blinding spray, and the lustiest shout would have been as utterly unheard amid that sky-rending uproar as an infant's wail amid the cannon-thunder of Gettysburg or Sedan.

But the lightness of the raft was its safety. It rose like a bubble upon the mountain waves, and although the castaways were drenched

through and through by the floods of water that broke over them, they succeeded in keeping their places. Their great fear now was that the fastenings which held them might give way, or that the raft itself might fall to pieces and be scattered like chips over the wild waters. How long that night lasted none of them could ever have told; it seemed to compress into its few hours whole ages of agony.

But at length the rage of the storm began to abate. The thunder grew fainter, the lightning glared less fiercely, the fury of the wind lulled by degrees, while, far away in the distance, a pale streak of light crept timidly along the edge of the great gulf of blackness. The day was beginning to dawn. And now came a still more welcome sign. The boys had barely time to make out each other's white, haggard faces (which looked doubly ghastly in the dim grayness of the coming dawn) when there broke over them one of those heavy squalls of rain in which a tropical storm expends the last of its failing strength, more precious at that moment to the worn-out castaways than a shower of coined gold.

With upturned faces and open mouths, the eager boys sucked in the "priceless drops that came pelting down, while at every draught new strength and life seemed to run like fire through their nerveless frames. With this fresh vigor came fresh hope, and when the rain ceased, Bob Harris's cheery shout of "Never say die, boys!" was heartily echoed by the whole band.

"Guess I feel a heap better'n I did half an hour ago," said Jake Merritt, expanding his chest with a grunt of satisfaction. "I kinder notion we'll stand another bout yet, 'fore we cave in."

And now the clouds rolled away, and the deep rich blue of the tropical sky shone out once more, and the rising sun broke forth in all its splendor, making the liquid mountains that heaved on every side flash and sparkle like diamonds. The young sailors at length ventured to cast off the lashings that bound them to the raft, and stretched their cramped and stiffened limbs with an intense enjoyment of which no one who has not actually felt it can have any idea.

"Now, if we could only raise some breakfast," muttered Bob, who had a true British appetite, "we shouldn't be so badly off after all."

But just then Jake (who was the keenest-sighted of the five) gave a sudden start, and arching his hand over his eyes, looked fixedly towards the southwest.

"Say, boys," cried he, excitedly, "there ain't nary foolin' in it this time. It that ain't land yonder, I'm a Mexikin!"

To the rest this news seemed (especially after their bitter disappointment of the day before) too good to be true; but it was true, nevertheless. Plain against the brightening sky, from which the last clouds were just disappearing, stood up a dark clump of tall, slender palm trees.

"Ain't it a bully place, boys? I reckon this goes ahead of Robinson Crusoe's island considerable some."

In truth, the new islet—which was now near enough to give them a clear view of it—appeared to be surpassingly beautiful. Hardly more than twelve feet above the water at any

point, it seemed to rest like a slumbering bird upon the shiny surface of the blue sunlit sea, through which the curving reefs of white coral broke every here and there in sudden flashes of brightness as keen and dazzling as the edge of an Eastern sword. Within these reefs lay a wide expanse of calm water, still and glassy as an Italian lake, between the rich summer blue of which and the deep shadowy green of the clustering trees lay a narrow belt of smooth white sand, firm and level as a marble pavement.

Beyond this the whole shore was clothed down to the very edge of the beach with the wonders of tropical vegetation—the fresh green of the wild fig, the dark glossy richness of the citron, the vast flag-like plantain, the great pyramid of the bread-fruit tree with its green globes hanging like bells beneath its long saw-edged leaves, and high over all, erect and stately as an Indian chief, the tall pillar-like stem and feathery crest of the magnificent cocoa-palm, the king of the tropical forest. Seen in the soft, bright beauty of early morning, the whole spot looked as peaceful and lovely as a new world on the day of its creation. But between them and this haven of rest lay the deadliest peril of all.

Around the barrier-reef the entire sea was one gnashing ring of white-tipped breakers, bursting upon the coral wall in vast spouts of angry foam, which flew high into the air with a deep, hollow roar that could be plainly heard even at that distance.

"Say, boys, this won't do," cried Jake Merritt: "we're on the win'ard side o' the island here, and if we git chucked on to that reef in the middle of all that muss, I guess we'll be whipped to shucks in half a minute. Unship them spars, and let's try and work the old raft round under the lee of the land, and then I reckon we'll fix to get ashore somehow."

He seized one of the broken spars as he spoke, and three of his four comrades, for poor little Louis was too utterly worn out for any further effort) promptly followed his example. But although they at first seemed to be making way, their failing strength was unequal to the strain of such an exhausting struggle. Just as they were slowly working towards the more sheltered side, a strong eddy suddenly whirled them round and threw them right in the path of an enormous billow, which caught them up and bore them to their doom straight and swift as an arrow.

"Hold fast, all!" shouted Merritt.

But the words were lost in a deafening roar, as the great wave, exploding in a whirl of boiling foam and lashing spray, dashed them right upon the merciless reef.

CHAPTER III.—The Mysterious Island.

"Guess that's what one mav call goin' by the 'Overland rapid transit,'" laughed Jake, picking himself up right on the inner edge of the reef, for the force of the wave was so tremendous that it had shot the raft and its crew across the whole breadth of the coral belt, as easily as a child would push a toy across a table.

"The train seems to have run off the line, though," said Bob Harris, clapping his hands

to his bleeding nose, which had come with considerable force against one of the planks.

Poor Mike O'Brien, reckless of his own safety in his anxiety to take care of little Louis (who had fortunately escaped quite unhurt), had got a deep ragged cut on his forehead from the sharp coral, and a gash across the back of his left hand; while Karl Hoffmann—who had turned a complete somersault—was holding his head with both hands as if he truly expected it to tumble off the moment he let go.

"H'awful railway h'accident!" cried Bob, imitating the voice of an English newsboy. "H'everybody killed 'cept our own reporter, who survived h'expressly to give a c'rect account of the pro-ceed'n's."

"Total de-struction of the cars!" added Merritt, in the same tone. "I s'pose the old raft's all in bits after such a shake-up as that."

But happily this was not the case. Thanks to the lowness of the reef, which offered no projecting point for the raft to strike upon, the latter had been ground along the coral rather than washed against it, and had escaped pretty easily. The outer planks, indeed, were badly shattered, and one or two of the ropes had been snapped by the shock; but a little knotting and splicing made the framework strong enough to carry out heroes across the smooth, shallow lagoon between the reef and the island, which was all that it now had to do. The moment the raft grounded upon the level beach the starving lads rushed like wildcats at the huge ripe plantains that hung temptingly on every side of them. Down went the rich, juicy fruits one after another, as if the feasters would never leave off; and when their hunger was at length fully satisfied they quenched their thirst from a tiny stream that filtered into the lagoon through the firm white sand.

But now that the excitement of this life-and-death battle was over and they were safe, the terrific strain of the last four days made itself felt in earnest. The unnatural strength that had hitherto kept them up seemed to give way all in a moment, and a few minutes later they were all fast asleep in the spreading shade of a large "bread-fruit. The sun was already at its height when they awoke again, and eyed each other with a puzzled look, hardly knowing yet where they were.

"Hurrah!" cried Bob Harris, "we really are here, then, after all! I dreamed that we were back aboard the Dolphin again, and 'Bully Black' laying into us with a rope's end, just in the old style."

"That's all done now, I reckon," said Jake Merritt, stretching his sinewy limbs with an air of drowsy enjoyment. "There's nobody here to bully us and knock us about—not much. We're going to have a reg'lar good time—that's what we're going to do."

"But won't we be afther lookin' for some shelter, annyway?" suggested Mike O'Brien. "Shure, av it comes on to rain agin the way it did this mornin', we'll be all dhrowned on dhry land."

"Well, I guess we might as well look around our new territory," said Jake, getting up, "and see whether there's any population beside ourselves."

"And until we do see," added Bob, "I vote that we go along carefully, and make as little noise as we can. I've always heard that they're a pretty decent set of chaps in the Maldive Isles (and this is one of them that we're on now, I fancy); but, still, there's no harm in being on the safe side."

Away they all went accordingly, carrying their broad-bladed sheath-knives (the only weapons they had) in readiness for any enemy who might turn up, and hugely enjoying the romance of exploring an unknown island in this Robinson Crusoe fashion, with the chance of unearthing at any moment a tribe of savages quite as picturesque as Friday himself. The island, like most of those in the Maldive group, was almost circular in shape, and measured about three-quarters of a mile from side to side. That it had been very recently inhabited was plain enough, for the fruit trees and banana plantations had evidently been tended with some care, and the marks of bare feet were still visible in the soft earth along the little brook; while at one point, where a kind of tank or pool had been scooped out, the boys picked up a broken earthen jar. A little farther on, in a sheltered spot near the centre of the islet, a small patch of ground had been cleared and planted with some kind of corn. Jake Merritt carefully examined what little was left of the crop, and pronounced it to be millet.

But all these signs of busy life and labor only deepened the chilling effect of the utter silence and loneliness that reigned on every side. Vast flights of wild pigeons were circling slowly around the tree-tops, and the wild ducks started up by scores from the border of the streamlet, but not a single human being was anywhere to be seen. At last under the sheltering covert of a palm grove, just behind the corn patch, the young explorers came upon a group of long, low, thatched huts, the overhanging eaves of which (as is usual in these regions of torrential rain) projected far beyond the edge of the roof on all sides, coming down to within a few feet of the ground.

"I say, mates," cried Bob Harris, "perhaps the poor fellows are ill with something, and can't get about. Let's go right in and see if we can't help 'em somehow."

He dashed through the open doorway of the nearest hut as he spoke, while his comrades made for the others. But they instantly recoiled with a cry of astonishment and dismay. All the huts were empty. Tokens of recent life abounded on every side—the mats on which the inmates had slept, the cocoanut shells which they had used as cups, their cooking vessels, their fishing nets, the light Hindoo axes with which they chopped their wood, and even several rude baskets filled with dried corn and bread-fruit; but where were those who had used them?

"Shure, an' it's a tirrible place enthirely," muttered O'Brien, with a shudder. "Av they're all dead wid fayver or the cholera, it's out av the fryin' pan into the fire we are!"

"It can't be that," said Harris, "for if there was nobody left to bury the dead, we'd find some of them lying about."

"That's so," cried Merritt. "Guess they've all gone out fishin'—for, you see, all the boats are

gone—and got lost in that storm that caught us last night."

"Thru for yez," assented Mike, looking greatly relieved.

"But vat come vid de vomans and ze shilds?" asked Karl Hoffman; "dey no go fish too, surely?"

"Yes, that gets me," said Jake, with a puzzled look; "I forgot all about the women and children. Well, I must give it up—it's too many for me all round!"

One thing, however, was clear enough—here was a snug home all ready for them; so they at once took possession of the biggest hut, and made a hearty lunch of the stored-up bread-fruit, the thick white pulp of which (tasting like light, wheaten bread mixed with fresh eggs) was just the thing for them after their long fast. There was not much work done that afternoon, for they were too thoroughly worn out by all that they had gone through to be restored by a short rest like that of the morning. Bob and Jake went down to the beach to haul up the raft out of harm's way. Mike and Karl set to work to pelt down coconuts, being still too weak to climb for them; while Louis busied himself with "tidying-up" the hut, rummaging out what stores the missing inhabitants had left behind them, and as he said, "getting everything in order for tea."

But when their evening meal was over, it was very pleasant to sit at their ease in front of the hut in the cool, balmy air, watching the sun go down behind the clustering tree-tops of their new home, and feeling that they were free at last, and that no one could bully and ill-treat them any more. Karl—whose stock of German songs and legends made him rank as the literary man of the party—told them several of his best stories, and ended by singing "Die Wacht am Rhein" in a style that might have satisfied Prince Bismark himself.

The evening ended with a lusty chorus which was a special favorite with them all, and the deep, solemn music of the grand old battle-psalm, pealing through the silence of the moon-lit palm groves, with the hollow roar of the sea answering it from the reefs outside, had a very fine effect. Jake Merritt, who was a poet in his way, added a verse of his own, which the rest echoed with a will—

"Though the storm may smash our timbers, and
the sea may foam and spray,
We'll clench our teeth and bear it, till the good
luck comes our way;
We'll do our work like sailors, and in God our
trust we'll lay,
As we go sailing on."

CHAPTER IV.—King or President?

When our heroes awoke the next morning, they felt wonderfully strengthened and refreshed. Even Louis—who belonged to that tough Western breed which has made the saying "Hard as a Breton," a proverb throughout all France—looked quite himself again. The first thing to be done, of course, was to have a swim in the lagoon, after which Mike and Karl, as if determined to

show how easily they could shake off their fatigue, started to forage. They were soon back again, Mike with a wild duck which he had knocked over with a well-aimed stone, and Karl with half a dozen fish that he had caught by baiting his hook with a red rag as before. But how were they to be cooked? Bob and Jake vaguely remembered having heard of savages lighting a fire by rubbing two sticks together; but they had not the least idea how to set about it.

"I show you!" cried Louis, gleefully; "I learn him from von old sailor, vat live long time on ze Pacific Isles. Look, see!"

Hunting up two dead and perfectly dry twigs, he cut a groove in one, and sharpened the other to a point. Then, setting the lower end of the grooved stick against the ground, he worked the point of the other vigorously up and down the groove, till, at length, a fine dust which had gradually collected in it actually took fire.

"Well done, our side!" shouted Bob Harris, lighting a dry leaf at the tiny flame, and thrusting it into the pile of fuel which the other boys had gathered.

A good fire was soon blazing, over which the fish and the duck were cooked on sharp sticks. Breakfast over, the young Crusoes "banked up" the fire well that it might not go out again, and then set about scouring their rusted knives with sand; after which, at Bob's suggestion that they should "have their names on the door in case anyone came to call," they carved their autographs on the house-front in the following order:

"Jacob Merritt, Boston, Mass., U. S.

"Robert Harris, Bristol, England.

"Michael O'Brien, Portruth, Ireland.

"Louis Beaumanoir, St. Brieuc, Bretagne, France.

"Karl Hoffman, Hamburg, North Germany."

Suddenly, Jake Merritt, who had been looking very thoughtful and pre-occupied for some minutes past, called out:

"Say, boys, I've got an idea!"

"You don't say so!" cried out Bob Harris, with pretended astonishment. "Better let it out, then, old chap—it'll only die for want of company."

"Come, don't be too sharp, Britisher, or you'll cut your own fingers," retorted the American, who was never at a loss for an answer. "Guess if you ever get hold of an idea, you won't dare to say so, 'cause then everybody 'ud know you must have stolen it."

"But what for an ideal, den, hast du found, Yawcob?" asked Karl Hoffmann.

"Why, look here," cried Jake; "we've got this island all to ourselves, and—for all we can see—we're the first white men that's ever put foot on it; so I reckon we've a clear right to take possession of it and 'stablish a reg'lar Gov'ment, same as Columbus did when he landed."

There was a moment of general silence while the other boys took in this dazzling possibility. Then Bob Harris said in tones of the deepest admiration:

"That is an idea, and no mistake! It'll be a pretty good change for us to be kings and lords here on shore after being deck-swabbers and cabin boys aboard ship. I say, Jake, you're the

biggest and oldest, and it was you that first thought of it—you'd better be king of the island."

"Thank ye, kindly, bub; I can't be king," answered the New Englander, with dignity. "Kings and such like fixings don't grow on our free Massachusetts sile, I reckon—we had just enough of them a hundred years ago. Guess I'll be President, if you like; and you want to obey me all the same as if I was king—mind that!"

"All right, old fellow," said Zob, slapping the newly nominated President on the back with more heartiness than reverence.

"For me, I had moch rader be King as to be President," piped little Louis's thin voice, while he eyed the tall Yankee boy as if the latter had really refused an actual throne. "Ze King has one great, big crown, and one fine palace to live in, and ze fine, grand clothes, and ze big soldier round him vid ze gay uniform! but as for our President—I 'ave seen him vonce ven he came troo our coun-tree, and he vas noting but one old man, en citoyen—vat you call 'plain clothes'—just like von of ourselves."

"But, I say, Jake," cried Bob Harris, "when they crown a king or anything like that, don't they upset a bottle of oil all over him? If we were aboard ship we could chuck a lot of tar over you instead; but we haven't got a drop here. We couldn't do it with salt water, could we?"

"Why, how you talk!" replied Jake, with patriotic indignation. "I calc'late you don't think they'd grease a President of the U-nited States like a cart-wheel, same as you do with one of your little one-horse kings over in Europe? No, sire! All you've got to do's just to stand around and say that you elect me President of—hello!"

"What's up?" asked Bob, as the President-elect's first speech came to a sudden halt.

"Guess this election can't go forward till we find out what I'm President of. Don't you see we haven't named the island yet?"

"No more we have," cried Harris, fully realizing the force of this objection. "Well, what shall we call it?"

"I have it!" shouted Jake Merritt. "See here, boys; we all b'long to different nations, and yet we're all chums; so let's call it 'Union Island,' and that'll give us all a fair share in it."

"Right you are!" cried Bob, approvingly. "Union Island it is."

"That's so," assented the President. "And now we're thought with naming the settlement, go ahead and elect me."

"Stand round, you chaps!" sang out Harris. "Now then, all together: 'We, the undersized citizens—no, undersigned citizens, I mean—of Union Island, pronounce you, the aforesaid Jacob Merritt here present (that's about the correct thing, ain't it, Jake?) our true and awful President, to have and to hold henceforth and forever, Amen.' Three cheers, boys!"

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" chorused the whole population, with the full power of all their four voices.

"Fellow-citizens, I think you," said the new President, bowing majestically. "I'll govern in accordance with the laws of this land—that's to say, I will when we've time to make some; and in the meantime I guess I'll run the Gov'ment the best way I can."

"Hurrah!" repeated the voice of the nation, more lustily than before.

"And now," resumed the head of the new Republic, as soon as the cheers which greeted this curious Presidential Message had died away, "I reckon the next thing we've got to do's to choose Ministers and form a Cabinet; so to save time, I guess each of you had better elect himself."

"All square," said Bob Harris; "I'm never too proud to make myself useful. When there's nothing better to be had, I don't mind being a Prime Minister, if it'll do anybody any good. Tell you what—I'll be the Admiralty Board, and look after the navy, when there's any to look after; for I fancy that all the effect we've got just now's those two or three pieces of our old raft yonder."

"And I sall be ze Home Secretaire, and do all ze cooking and ze vashing!" cried little Louis Beaumanoir, with his queer chirping laugh.

"Why, is that the sort of thing that a Home Secretary has to do in your parts?" asked the President, looking puzzled—as indeed he well might.

"Shouldn't wonder, for they say he's always getting into hot water," answered Bob Harris, with a broad grin.

"And Oi'll be the army," shouted Mike O'Brien, "to maintain p'ace and order, and foight iverybody that comes widin' a moile av us."

"Und vat zall I be den?" asked Karl Hoffmann. "You do go zo quick, der zall be no office left ven I komm!"

"Never fear, old chap!" cried Harris; "you shan't be left out in the cold for all that. We'll make you Postmaster-General, and you'll have a pretty easy berth of it, for we've got no letters, and no way to send them if we had!"

"No, no," said President Merritt; "Karl shall be an Academy of Fine Arts, and run the musical and literary fixings, he's bound to do it first-chop. So there's our Cabinet formed, I reckon, and we hain't taken long over it, neither."

"Hold hard!" cried Bob Harris, suddenly, "we haven't got it all shipshape yet! Father used to say that the first thing a new Government always does is to clap on a lot of taxes, but how are we going to do that when there's no money to pay 'em with?"

"Don't you fret yourself about that, Admiral," answered the President! "you won't find many taxes around in this free Republic of ours. We'll have nothin' but 'free-will contributions' here—only they've got to foot up just as much as if they were taxes, you know."

"Well, now we're all right, anyhow," said Bob, with the air of one who had just got a great weight off his mind.

"You bet we are," assented the President. "Well, boys—Ministers, I mean—I calc'late we've done a right smart morning's work. 'Tain't every country, I reckon, that would fix up a brand-new Gov'ment and git it runnin' all proper 'tween breakfast and lunch. And now that we're through with that job, I move that the national Parliament adjoin to get lunch ready."

The national Parliament did so, and the next hour exhibited to a wonderful universe the unwonted spectacle of the Admiralty Board cutting wood, the Army fetching water, the Home Secretary tending the fire, the Academy of Fine Arts opening cocoanuts, and the President himself.

with his shirt-sleeves rolled up to his elbows, peeling bananas with might and main.

CHAPTER V.—An Ocean Palace.

The new government worked admirably for the next two or three days.

Commander-in-Chief O'Brien captured a whole army of ducks and pigeons, while Admiral Harris made prizes of scores of fish, while Home-Secretary Beaumanoir cooked to admiration.

Meanwhile Professor Höffman, having made a geological survey of the whole island, came back from his travels with a collection of fruits and vegetables worthy of the Botanical Society of Berlin; and what with cocoanuts, bread-fruit, bananas, corn, fish, pigeons, and wild ducks, the whole Cabinet was literally rolling in wealth.

"If it goes on like this," said the Chief Magistrate in his after-breakfast Presidential Message on the third morning, "I guess my term of office 'll have nary show in history, for there ain't a single crime or a single war in the record."

But events were at hand which were to make President Merritt's administration famous in a way that he little expected. That very evening Admiral Harris moved the immediate construction of a navy, their only vessel—the raft—being manifestly unseaworthy.

"And besides," he added, with the air of a judge quoting an unanswerable point of law, "Robinson Crusoe built a boat, you know—so of course we must."

"And he made just the very tallest kind of bungle of it at that," observed the President, severely. "Guess we'll fix things better'n Robinson Crusoe did when we begin."

"Better than Robinson Crusoe!" cried Bob, aghast at this daring attack upon the patron saint of all adventurous boys. "Why, don't you know he was the greatest man that ever lived?"

"The greatest of his time, p'r'aps," retorted the unhaunted President; "but you've got to remember that he lived hundreds of years ago, 'way back in the dark ages, 'fore the foundation of Boston and New York. The world's moved on consid'able since his time, I reckon; and if he was to come on deck now, and look around a bit, he'd feel kinder cheap, that's a fact!"

The boys could hardly believe their ears. What would he say next? One who had no reverence for Robinson Crusoe was quite capable of denying the existence of Admiral Nelson or Sinbad the Sailor.

"Now, just look here," resumed the lecturer, "Robinson Crusoe builds his boat so big, and so far away from the sea, that when it is built, he can't launch it, and it just lies and rots; and he's by way of being a sailor, too! How d'ye get around that?"

The blank looks of his hearers showed that they did not get around it at all.

"And that ain't all, neither," pursued the orator. "How long did it take him to get away from that island—an island almost in sight of the mainland, mark ye? Why, twenty-seven years; and he wouldn't have managed then, only a ship came blunderin' up agin his old island by accident, and took him off."

The listeners exchanged glances of silent perplexity and dismay.

Robinson Crusoe's cause was evidently losing ground before this overwhelming preacher.

"Now, wait a bit," continued the President; "that ain't all yet. 'Most any man could run a desert island by himself if he had a wreck always handy—first his own ship, and then that Spaniard—to chuck ashore stockings, and sweetmeats, and thrashin' machines, and sacks full o' dollars, and everything else he wanted. But where the real grit of a man comes in is when he ain't got nary thing at all, and has to invent 'em all out of his own head, same as we're going to do now!"

"But how can we?" cried Harris, somewhat staggered by this bold assertion.

"I dunno," answered the President, with manly frankness; "but we'll fix it somehow, you'll see!"

So the next morning they avoided Robinson Crusoe's error by beginning to cut down the biggest of a group of cocoa palms on a point jutting out into the lagoon. For more than an hour they relieved each other in using the two hatchets they had found; but this was hot work within seven degrees of the Line, and Bob at length proposed a swim. In a trice all five were paddling about in the warm, clear, buoyant water, and splashing each other with shouts of glee, till O'Brien, tiring of the sport, scrambled up on to the point, and took a dive worthy of poor Captain Webb himself. But he instantly popped up again, crying:

"Boys, boys! I've found something!"

"Have you really?" cried Bob. "Just fancy now! that's the very thing I lost a year ago, and I've been hunting for it ever since. Hand it over, there's a good fellow!"

"Arrah, thin, what fur wud ye be afther laughin' at me, sure?" remonstrated Mike. "I tell yez I've found a cave—a rale fairy cave, that bates Tom Sawyer's all hollow!"

One by one they plunged where he pointed, and each in turn had a dim but splendid vision, through a gap in the coral wall, of what did indeed seem an enchanted cavern filled with all the fabled wonders of fairyland. Mike and Louis, in their excitement, would have kept on diving till they were quite exhausted; but the cooler Merritt reminded them that the falling tide would soon leave the cave-mouth free; and, sure enough, when the full ebb came, more than half the opening was above water.

"Now for it!" cried Bob. "We'd best take our shoes, for you might just as well walk upon a knife-edge as on that sharp coral."

"And we'll bring the knives and hatchets along," added Merritt, "in case we find a sea-serpent or an octopus located on the basement floor, like that fellow in Victor Hugo."

For such practiced athletes it was child's play to dive under the low arch of the cave-mouth, and then to climb onto the narrow ledge of coral that ran along the side of the cavern. But, once inside, their talk and laughter were instantly hushed, and they gazed around them with a thrill of wondering awe, such as they had never felt before.

Through a rich summer twilight of mingled green and purple, like that which streams through the stained windows of some great

cathedral, loomed arches and pillars and grottos and stairs and gateways, bright with all the glories of a coloring such as no painter ever equalled. Flowers and leaves of every hue—gorgeous crimson, delicate pink, deep glossy blue, pale gold, tender green, and velvety black—were outspread on all sides, so perfect a copy of real vegetation that nothing short of actually touching them could have convinced anyone that these lovely blossoms and tendrils were only cold, hard stone. It was a temple of flowers!

So sound broke the grand and solemn stillness of that glorious place, save the tinkle of a tiny waterfall through a narrow cleft in the roof, and the faint lapping of unseen water far down in the sunless caverns where men had never seen. They were the first that had ever looked upon the silent beauty of this ocean palace, with the sea for its pavement—a palace which God's secret workmen, the coral insects, had been building for ages in the depths of the lonely set, unwatched and unknown.

"I feel as if we'd done wrong to come here at all," whispered Merritt. "Human bein's don't b'long here—sitch a place as this ain't fit for any one but God."

"Let's be afther gittin' away, annyhow," muttered O'Brien, with a half superstitious shudder. "Sure, I fale as if somethin' evil 'ud catch us iv we don't."

Just at that moment, as if in confirmation of his ominous words, a black, ghostly shadow flitted athwart the rich transparent green of the water around the cave-mouth, and up to the very foot of the coral ledge on which they stood, came, with a savage rush, the long, gray body, gaping jaws, and small, cunning, cruel eye of a monstrous shark.

CHAPTER VI.—The Shadow of Coming Evil.

The sudden appearance of this grim and merciless enemy in that scene of peace and beauty struck even the reckless boys with dismay.

"How on ze earth hafe he got in?" cried Karl Hoffmann; "I always tink dem lagoon hafe no shark in him. Dere must be one hole somevere in ze ausser (outer) reef."

"Maybe," growled Bob Harris; "but what we've got to think of now is not how to get in, but how we're to get out."

All five looked grave, for they now began to realize for the first time the full extent of their danger.

If the shark chose to stay where he was (as he seemed only too likely to do with such a harvest of prey almost within his reach) they would be kept imprisoned here till the returning tide filled the cave, and either drowned them like rats, or swept them down into the jaws of their enemy. What was to be done?

"Could not we climb up by zis hole vere de vatairefall come troo?" suggested Louis Beaumanoir.

"No good, it's too narrow," said Bob, shaking his head. "Tell you what, boys, it won't do for us five to let ourselves be bullied by an old brute of a shark; let's all tackle him at once with

our knives, and I'll be bound we'll settle him somehow."

"No, that's too risky," objected Merritt; "we've got to make it a dead-sure thing, or else it's no good trying it at all. Let me think a minute."

Then came a dead silence, and all looked anxiously at the thoughtful face of their leader, whose keen eye swept along the side of the cavern as if seeking something which he could nowhere find. All at once it lighted up with a gleam of triumph which showed that the way of escape was found at last.

"I've got it, boys!" cried the President. "I guess we'll weather old Shovelnose yet."

A few words, spoken as low as if he feared that the shark itself might overhear them, explained his plan; but, short as it was, it seemed to produce a wonderful effect upon his hearers, who interrupted him with a boisterous shout of approval. A little way along the side of the cave from the spot where they were standing, the coral had crumbled or been broken away, so as to form an inlet or cleft about twelve feet long by there or four broad. Thither the boys picked their way along the ledge, while the grim sentinel in the water below dogged every step like a haunting shadow.

Just as they reached its edge Louis stumbled forward with a loud scream, and seemed to be actually falling into the dark, narrow pool below, into which the eager shark instantly darted like an arrow.

Never had that shark made a greater mistake in the whole course of its misspent life.

In his eagerness to seize Louis—whose cleverly-feigned stumble might have been mistaken for a real one by a quicker brain than his—the fork-tailed pirate had run himself into a place where he had no room to turn around, and where, in throwing himself on his side to clutch his prey (as a shark's under-hung jaw always obliges it to do), he had entangled his huge, projecting back fin among the coral branches and had altogether got into a very awkward "fix."

"Now!" cried Jake Merritt, as his ax fell like a hunderbolt upon the shark's brittle snout, while Bob Harris' knife struck home into the vital spot just behind the back fin.

The wounded monster lashed and struggled so terrifically that the coral all around it splintered and crashed like broken glass, and Louis, who had already made one home thrust into the shark's broad whity-gray sides, and was just raising his arm to repeat it, lost his footing (this time in real earnest), and fell all his length, almost within reach of the terrible jaws that were gnashing and snapping like a steel-trap.

Another moment and all would have been over with him; but quick as lightning, Karl Hoffmann's broad blade was buried to the very hilt in the monster's eye, while the second hatchet, wield by Mike O'Brien's strong arm, came down upon the flapping tail with a blow that cut right through the bone.

"He's most through with it," said Merritt, dragging up Louis out of harm's way; "I guess he won't want another dose."

Nor did he. A few more convulsive struggles, and their enemy lay dead before them, while the conquerors hastened to make their way out of

the cavern and get safe ashore, lest (as Merritt suggested), "the junior partner of the firm might be somewhar round, and come along to see what the boss shark was doin'."

"Well, I guess the first battle of the Union Island Army has resulted in a glorious victory," remarked the President that evening, as well as an enormous mouthful of fish and bread-fruit would let him; "and the enemy's ours whenever we care to go and fetch him, for he ain't a-goin' to get out of that coral bathtub o' his in a hurry. Say, professor, you're our public press, I reckon, so you'd best begin right off and lay down the history of the war."

"Und mit vat zall I log him?" asked Hoffmann, with a grin. "Zall I write ze historee on mine shirt mit one burnt stick?"

"Guess it wouldn't be much blacker than the history of some Eu-ropean fixings, if you did," observed the President, cynically. "Well, I reckon we'll have to invent pens and papers, for we hain't got nary one. It's kinder rough on the cause of pop'lar education, too; for unless we write our own books, I dunon whar the national library's to come from—we didn't bring any literature ashore with us, I guess."

"Troth, but we did, though!" cried Mike O'Brien, jumping up as if struck with a new idea. "I'd clane forgotten that cull newspaper that I put in the crown o' my hat!"

"In the crown of your hat?" echoed Bob, amid a general shout of laughter. "Did you put it there in despair of ever being able to get it into your head?"

"No, he think dat ven de vedder get hot ze news melt and run down into his brains like buttaire!" chuckled little Louis.

"Arrah, now, be aisy wid yer jokin'!" said Mike, grinning. "Sure, I heard our cull captain say wanst that nobody cud iver git through a Bombay newspaper; so, thinks I, if the sun can't get through it'll kape me head illigantly cool."

"Well, done, general!" said the President. "You're holding two offices at once, for you seem to be keeper of the public records as well as commander-in-chief. Well, I guess you'd better put our national literature to dry, if there's anything left of it."

Carefully, as if handling a lighted bombshell, Mike extracted the pulpy mass from his string "crown" hat.

It was promptly squeezed between two flat stones and then set in the sun to dry; after which Merritt cautiously unfolded it, and, to his great satisfaction, found the print still readable, though a good deal frayed.

"Now, General," he cried, handing the paper to O'Brien, "you being the custodian of our public library, it's your duty to make us acquainted with the contents."

Mike was silent, and looked embarrassed.

"Why, you say you can't read?" asked Merritt, in surprise.

"Yes, I can read," answered O'Brien, hesitatingly; "but—just at present I'm a trifle out of practice."

Amid the laughter that greeted this modest confession, Merritt took the paper, and glancing over it, called out:

"Hello, boys, here's something! Listen!

"STARTLING DISCOVERY OF A NATIVE PLOT.

Schemes to Overthrow the British Rule in India."

"What?" haven't they had enough of it yet?" cried Bob, savagely. "They want a licking like we gave 'em in '57, and they'll get it, too!"

"Recent events in the Soudan," read Merritt, "(that means poor Gordon's murder and the fall of Khartoum, I reckon), 'have excited to a dangerous pitch the inflammable Mussulman population of Western India. For some time past, suspicious symptoms have been multiplying; and the fiercer Mohammedan devotees have been openly preaching rebellion against England, whose power they believe to be on the wane. But within the last few days the activity of our native spies has revealed the existence of a definite and widespread plot to repeat on a yet vaster scale the great tragedy of 1857, one of the leaders having given orders for the massacre of all Europeans without distinction.'"

"Well, as sure as I'm President of this Republic, that puts us in a pretty close place," said Merritt, throwing down the paper. "The folks on these islands are Mohammedans, and mighty strict ones at that; and bein' in constant communication with India, they's bound to know of this plot; and o' course they'll go for the first chance of hoeing their own path in the gineral massacre, and the first chance is us five. Seems to me we've got here just in time to be comfortably done for."

CHAPTER VII.—A Startling Visit.

A dead silence followed this cheerful announcement, broken at length by Bob Harris.

"Look here, I say—if the plot's found out, it seems to me that we're all right, after all."

"All wrong, you mean. These Mohammedans are always spitefulest when they're fairly tree'd; and now that this plot's busted up, the fellers that's in it'll do all the mischief they can afore they go under, just out of pure contrariness. If they catch us here, we'll have no more show than a dug-out woodchuck."

"Well, then," cried Bob, "we'd better just build our boat as quick as we can and get off to sea again at once."

"We'll build our boat, I reckon," assented the President; "but we want to do more'n that. If any of our neighbors come to call (and I only wonder they haven't come already) 'fore that boat's fixed, we're all up a tree. Now, how air you goin' to keep 'em from findin' us, if they do come?"

"I don't know," said Bob, despondently.

"I do, then," rejoined Merritt, enjoying his own superior smartness even in that terrible moment. "We'll go and live in that coral cave."

The silence was a long moment. That was an idea, indeed!

"But ze sharks?" objected Louis.

"Oh, we'll have a private stairway, and let the basement door alone. We'll just turn that

waterfall o' one side, widen the hole where it comes through, hang a rope there, and get in and out as we like."

"Boot ze tide zall drown us!" cried Hoffmann.

"No, I reckon it don't kiver the hull cave, only part of it. We'll find out 'bout that to-morrow; but as for the waterfall, we'll settle it right away, 'fore daylight gives out."

The source of the waterfall was soon discovered in a tiny rivulet, which, branching off from the brook, disappeared in a hole in the ground.

To remove the sand-bank that diverted its course, and build a strong dam of coral across the mouth of its channel, was the work of but a few minutes for the active boys, who, having waited till they were satisfied that their way down into the cave was quite clear, went to bed well contented with their day's work.

But their sleep, though sound, was anything but peaceful.

"If it's part of a President's duties to have bad dreams," said Merritt, when they all met at breakfast, "I guess I've discharged mine consid'able smart. I've been dreamin' all night that I was a Mohammedan prophet, beheadin' General Gordon with a newspaper; and every time I cut off his head, another one grew on, and the one that was cut off turned into a cocoanut, till I had quite a big pile of them around."

"And I did dream," cried Louis Beaumanoir, "dat I was sit at dinnare, and everysing that I put in my mouf turn to co-ral, and break all my teef in leetle bits!"

"Och, thin, Oi had a worse dhrame than either of yez," said Mike O'Brien. "I dhramed that I was a shark——"

"And not far wrong, either, judging by your appetite," chuckled Harris, refilling Mike's empty coconut-shell.

"And that I thried to swalley that newspaper that we wor rading, and got choked in doin' it," went on O'Brien, disdaining to notice the insinuation.

"Well, I don't wonder at that," said Rob, "for newspaper statements are rather difficult to swallow. By-the-by, we didn't finish reading that paper yesterday; let's have some more of it now, while we're digesting."

"Here's just whar we stoped

LATEST INTELLIGENCE.

and the Nation Rather Connected with the
 1854.

[illegible]

that this audacious criminal has escaped once - more.' "

"That's as good as Rob Roy himself," cried Bob.

“Search is being made for him in all directions,” continued Merritt, “and a reward of 5,000 rupees has been offered for his capture. His description is as follows: Figure, tall and bony, nearly six feet in height; eyes small and deeply set, nose long and sharp, coarse black hair, prominent chin, blue seam across the left side of his forehead, left shoulder somewhat higher than right, and large scar on chest in the form of a white star.”

"I should think he's the first of the White Star Line that's ever been out here," said Bob, with a grin. "I say, ain't 'Dacoit' a fine name for a fellow? It sounds even so much better than plain 'robber.'"

"But why do they call them Dacoits, anyhow?" asked Merritt.

"Because they decoy people, of course," answered Bob, confidently, just as they call those stranglers. 'Thug,' because they put a handkerchief round your neck and tug at it till they throttle you. Now, then, let's get to work."

To work they went with a vim, Karl and Bob (who were both practiced carpenters) being laid off to the boatbuilding, while the other three widened the funnel-like hole leading down into the cavern. The brittle coral shivered like glass under their blows, and the gap was soon wide enough for one to pass one at a time.

Meanwhile Louis had been plaiting a rope of twisted palm-fibre, which was made fast to a neighboring tree and dropping down the funnel by way of a ladder.

This done, Merritt slid down into the cave, and fixed a chip of wood in the face of the coral ledge as a tide-mark.

It was still there when he returned after the flood-tide, and thus the question whether the cavern could be inhabited was finally settled.

That very evening they "moved their furniture," as Merritt said, though the narrowness of the descent into "Fairy Cave" (as they named their new home) made the job a long one.

"We've got to do all our cooking down here," said Jake, "for we musn't show more smoke than we can help. The boat-building's got to be done upstairs, o' course, but the bushes hide it pretty well, and, anyhow, folks 'ud take it for the work of the people that were here before us, so long as we ain't seen."

But although the boys now labored harder than ever, and the new boat advanced rapidly, they no longer took pleasure in the work.

The shadow of coming danger or death was darkening their brief bright holiday, and withering the boyish, light-hearted enjoyment of their first days ashore. The fairy island was changed to a coral prison, whence they must escape at all hazards, even if they had to trust themselves once more to the mercy of the treacherous sea which had so nearly devoured them already.

All this while, however, nothing happened to confirm their fears.

One or two light native boats had been descried

in the offing, but always at a great distance; for, so far from approaching the island, they seemed bent upon giving it as wide a berth as possible.

"P'r'aps they think it's h'anted," said Merritt—"and all the better if they do!"

At last their boat—in building which the timbers of the raft, as well as the nails and ropes attached to them, had been turned to good account—was so nearly finished that a very few hours more would make her ready for launching.

Hoping to finish her that evening, they had worked till it was almost too dark to see what they were about; and they went to bed earlier than usual in order to be at work again the very first thing next morning.

But that night, for the first time since their landing, Bob Harris was wakeful and restless. Nor was he the only one who could not sleep.

A voice suddenly whispered beside him:

"Bob, are you awake?"

"Yes."

"Listen!"

Bob listened, and heard something that made even his bold heart beat quicker.

Faint and far, but more distinct every moment, came a dull, measured sound, which he had heard too often not to recognize it at once. It was the stroke of a paddle.

"Don't wake the others," whispered Merritt. "There ain't more'n one man comin', or two at the outside, else they'd make more noise. We two'll go out and spy around, and if we see any risk of their finding us out, we'll try and give 'em a good reception, and make 'em sick of comin' here any more."

Noiselessly as shadows, the two lads crawled to the funnel, and then, keeping well in the deep shadow of the trees (for the splendid tropical moonlight was now at the full) stole down to the lagoon.

A dark object showed itself against the snowy whiteness of the outer coral reef.

A canoe, guided by one shadowy figure, was heading one of the narrow, winding, perilous channels through the reef—a hazardous feat even in broad day, and one which the boldest man living might have hesitated to attempt at night.

"He's a plucky fellow, whoever he is," muttered Bob, admiringly. "Keep close, Jake, he's coming right towards us."

The canoe entered the lagoon, and, gliding across it, touched the beach not ten yards from their hiding place.

As the unknown leaped ashore, the moonlight fell full upon him, and Merritt gave a sudden start. While Harris hardly repressed a cry of dismay.

What description was it which made them recognize at once that tall gaunt form, those sharp prominent features and small, deep-set eyes, those uneven shoulders, and that star-shaped mark on the bare, bony chest, never seen before, but terribly familiar nevertheless?"

There was no room for doubt. This midnight intruder upon their peaceful solitude was the brigand, the assassin, the plotter of treason and massacre—Shamo, the Dacoit!

CHAPTER VIII.—Only One Chance Left.

The boys stood for a moment as if turned to statues; but even the stunning shock of this awful revelation could not quite overpower the thrill of strange and terrible enjoyment that came along with it.

Here at last was one of the mysterious dangers about which they had read so often, brought home to their very doors; and now was the time for them to show what stuff they were made of.

But the great excitement of the adventure, after all, lay in the fact of their enemy being called a "Dacoit." Meeting a plain "robber" would have been nothing; but facing a Dacoit—this was romance indeed!

Meanwhile, Shamo seemed doubtful what to do next. He stood motionless for a minute or two, shooting quick, suspicious glances all around him, and bending his head forward as if to listen for any sound of life, his wolfish face looking so hideous as he did so, that the admiration excited in the minds of both lads by his daring exploits began to change to disgust.

At last, having apparently satisfied himself that all was safe so far, the Hindoo moved stealthily forward, and the two boys, after allowing him to get a little way in advance, followed him with all possible caution.

But beyond keeping him in sight wherever he went, they had as yet no plan of action whatever.

Even Merritt's quick brain had no device to meet this new and overwhelming danger. It was now certain that Shamo, having made India too hot to hold him, had fled to these remote islands as his likeliest place of refuge; and it seemed clear enough that, hearing of this deserted islet, he had come off to it alone (probably under the pretense of a night's fishing) to see whether he might safely lie hid there in case the British authorities should find out whether he had gone, and should order the islanders to deliver him up.

But what was to be done now?

To let Shamo remain on their island was in

possible, and it was not easy to see how he could be got rid of. Should they scuttle the canoe to cut off his retreat, and then call up their comrades?

But apart from the tiger-like strength and agility which he evidently possessed, there hung at his girdle the formidable tulwar (Hindoo sword) with which he had cut his way through a whole band of armed assailants—a weapon worth a score of their short knives and light hatchets.

Merritt had originally intended (as has been seen) to work upon the intruder's superstitious fears, and frighten him away from the island by making him believe it haunted; but a man like Shamo would hardly be assailable by the childish terrors which dismayed the ignorant islanders of the Maldives.

Perhaps, after all, their best plan would be to wait and see whether he might not leave the place of his own accord.

While they were thus hesitating, the question was suddenly settled for them.

The Hindoo, moving slowly across the open ground, caught his foot against the rope by which the boys were wont to slide down into Fairy Cave.

Suspicious as a prowling tiger, the veteran bandit stopped down to examine the rope, took it up in his hand, and then moved forward as if to see whither it led.

The two unseen watchers felt their hearts stand still. Another moment and the entrance of the cave would be discovered, while their companions, if awake, would probably take the jerking of the rope for a signal, and betray themselves by shouting or clambering up.

There was only one thing to do—and they did it. Jake Merritt's hatchet flew swift and straight as an arrow right at Shamo's head, which it would certainly have cleaved had not an accidental movement of the Dwarf at that instant diverted the blow to his shoulder, in which the ax made a gash, whence the blood poured in torrents.

Bob Harris' ax instantly followed that of his friend, accompanied by a yell as terrific as an Apache's war-whoop; but at that moment the moon was hidden, and the effect of the blow was lost.

The noise, however, startled the three sleepers below. They answered with a shout which, rolling down the hollow up the rock-funnel, and magnified a hundredfold by the echoes of the cavern, sounded dreadfully hideous. The wounded Dwarf turned and fled like a deer.

Bob and Jake rushed down the ladder in pursuit, but a powerful rope stopped Merritt, who came slowly to the ground, while Harris, seeing

close behind, fell over him before he could stop. As they regained their feet, the splash of a paddle in the lagoon told them that their enemy had escaped, just as Mike, Karl and Louis came scrambling up the "chimney" in hot haste.

"There's only one chance left for us now, boys," said Merritt, after explaining what had happened, "and that's just to be off right away. Let's go and finish our boat at once; there'll be light enough with this moon."

"Any chance of that rascal dying, do you think?" asked Harris, as they all went down to the boat. "You hit him hard, I know; and I rather think I did, too."

"No such luck," answered Merritt. "He's bled consid'able, I see, but he ran away a deal too spry to be badly hurt. First thing we know, he'll bring a whole tribe of these niggers down on us, and I reckon we don't want to be at home when they call. I kinder suspicion, by their fightin' shy of this place the way they do, that there's some special reason why nobody ain't allowed to live here; so if they were to find us in it, they'd be safe to scalp the lot of us. Now then to work!"

The little that remained to be done was soon finished, the moonlight lasting them bravely to the very end; and just as the first gleam of sunrise flashed along the silent sea, the castaways, who had gathered all the provisions they could in the time, cleared the outer reef, and shot out into the waste of waters once more.

CHAPTER IX.—Overhauled by a Buggalow.

"Well, Jake, what orders? You're captain, you know," said Bob Harris, who sat clutching the sheet which held their tiny sail, while Merritt handled the steering oar.

"Keep her well out to sea," was the answer. "We've got to stand off and on a bit, for the wind's against us—it's the reg'lar time for easterly winds just now, I reckon—but we'll get along somehow."

In fact the sail, small as it was, and rudely rigged on a spar just big enough to carry it, worked very well in this light breeze, and they were soon at a considerable distance from Union Island. Thus did the young adventurers find themselves afloat a second time in midocean, on a craft far too frail for rough water which, although much larger than that with which they had quitted their burning ship, could hardly be expected to last more than a few days.

But in spite of all this, they seemed no sign of being overhauled and captured.

The spirit of adventure was working into their blood, and after the wonderful experiences of the last few weeks, they felt equal to facing any danger, and overcoming it, too.

"Slack away a bit!" shouted Merritt, suddenly, bearing with all his might upon the steering-oar. "Slack away more yet—get her head round—keep her full."

"Why, you're going to bring us right back again!" cried Bob, staring. "Where do you want to go, anyhow?"

"To that island south of Union Islet. I know there's one there, for I've seen it on a clear day once and again."

"Vat?" cried Karl Hoffmann, in amazement. "Can ve go to dem island? Vy, just now we have run away from him! If ve do go back, den come ve out of ze fire-pan into ze fry!"

"Not much, I reckon," said Merritt, coolly. "Look here, boys—I've seen aboard a ship with these Mohammedan fellers, and I learned all I could of their ways, 'cause it might come in handy some time. Well, they told me that although they counted a Christian fair game when he was up and able to defend himself, yet if he came to them helpless and helpless, and in a bad fix, they'd be ready to help him, even if he was their worst enemy."

"They'd have killed us on sight if they'd caught us upon that island; but if we come to them from the open sea as if we'd been just passing, and never let on that we've been on the island at all, they'll be real good to us."

A momentary silence greeted this brilliant idea, followed by a general buzz of approval.

"Well, you're the boy to think of things, Jake, in and out," cried Bob Harris. "That's our game and no mistake!"

"But what if we mate Shamo?" suggested "Priest."

"Well, what if we do? He'll never know that we were on that island, for he never got a word of us from first to last; and we must take our care not to let on that we know him. He'll just think he's been attacked by savages, or maybe by evil spirits. We're all right, I reckon. Go ahead."

They held on their new course for some time, and the speck of land was already visible to the northward, just where Merritt declared the near island to be, when little Louis called out suddenly:

"See, see! dere comes von buggalow?"

True enough, a good way to the northward, and apparently holding the same course as themselves, was one of those queer little craft (known to all who have sailed the Indian Ocean)

which, with their low bows and high, square sterns always look as if they were going down by the head.

But in spite of their strange appearance and small size—for they seldom, if ever, exceed thirty tons' burden—these quaint little cockleshells voyage fearlessly across the open seas for hundreds and even thousands of miles, not only to Ceylon and the Malabar coast of India, but even to Sumatra, Borneo, and regions remoter still.

"Well, boys, we're in big luck to fall in with that craft," said Merritt. "If I'd had a wish given me, that's just what I'd have chosen."

"Vat mean you, den, Yawcob?" asked Hoffmann, wonderingly, while his three companions looked up in equal amazement. "If ve zee dem not, ve kkomm to ze land all ze same."

"Yes! but don't you see what a difference this makes? These fellers'll bring us ashore in their own boat and tell the story for us without our needin' to say a word; and I guess their chums at home can't suspect our havin' been on the islands before when they hear that we were bearin' toward 'em when first sighted. The other critters'll tell 'em that we're a shipwrecked crew picked up in a makeshift boat on the open sea; and I reckon the Maldivians 'll take the word o' their own folks where mayhap they wouldn't take ours. See?"

"Thru for yez," said Mike, admiringly. "It's an illigant plan, sure, and ye're a broth of a boy, enthirely for thinkin' av it!"

"Slack away the sheet a bit—we must tack and veer a spell, as if we weren't sure which way to go," said the diplomatic Jake, seeing that the buggalow, with its huge sail of matting outspread to the freshening wind, was fast overhauling them. "Now, then, all of ye jump up together, and when I give the word, holler like nigers. Are you ready? Now!"

The boys shouted with all the power of their lungs, and the next moment a faint answering hail reached them from the buggalow, which slightly altered her course, and stood right for them.

"Now, we'll get quit of these fixings right away," said Merritt, dropping overboard the two hatchets which they had found on Union Island, and the telltale newspaper containing the story of Shame's escape. "Them axes might have some mark on 'em that these fellers 'ud know; and anyway it's best to be on the safe side."

Nearer and nearer came the buggalow, till they could all see plainly her sloping gunwale, her high, pointed prow, and her broad, fan-like sail of matting. Finally, as the buggalow came within hail, the crew of the little craft

as iron wire, and her big, heavy stern, all ablaze with red, green, and yellow paint, through which its two square portholes peered like staring eyes.

The dark, lean, blackbearded crew, clad only in white turbans and cotton drawers, looked quite outlandish as their vessel.

Most of them had the dusky skin, --all sharp features, and slim, supple limbs of Hindoos; but the two who appeared to be the officers were taller, larger, and fairer, showing marks of Persian or Arab blood. All wore thick beards, while shaving their heads as smooth as a billiard ball, so that (as Bob Harris remarked with a chuckle) "when they wanted to be young again, they'd only have to turn their heads upside down."

Queer as they looked, however, the Maldivians seemed kindly disposed, and made friendly signs to the boys, who, rough and ragged as they were, and still thin and worn from their late hardships, had a thoroughly "castaway" look.

A rope, flung from the buggalow as she ran alongside, was cleverly caught by O'Brien, and in a trice all five were safe on board of her, after which (as Merritt had shrewdly foreseen) the islanders, not thinking the ill-made boat worth taking in tow, cast her off and let her drift away, carrying with her the only evidence which could betray our heroes' secret.

"Salaam aleikoom!" (peace be with you) said Merritt, who had not studied the ways of his Mohammedan shipmates for nothing.

"Aleikoom salaam!" (with you be peace) chorused the Maldivians, evidently both pleased and surprised to find a "foreign unbeliever" so familiar with their Mohammedan forms of politeness.

But before the conversation began to flag,

Merritt, having exhausted his whole stock of Arabic phrases, his next remark, was rather at a loss to say next, so he contented himself with pointing seaward, and repeating several times, with great emphasis, the Hindustani word "Ag" (fire), imitating with his hands at the same time the movement low lapping flames.

The Mohammedans nodded, with a look which showed that they quite understood him, and produced a big bowl of rice and several large pieces of a golden, glistening, brown substance, which Merritt took with the decency of a host, but which he did not touch, his favorite quality with the Mohammedans. The boys, too, were to be particularly hungry, and the talk began.

Then Bob and I saw that I had picked up some of the old Malay language, which I had not yet had a chance of learning. I had not yet had a chance of learning the Malay language, which I had not yet had a chance of learning.

On the other hand, the taller of the two light-complexioned men (who seemed to be the captain) knew a little English, so the natives soon learned all that our heroes cared to tell.

"You go wid us, we bring you to de Sultan," said Captain Ismail.

"The Sultan of Twelve Thousand Isles?" asked Jake, suddenly recalling the native title of the Maldivian King, of whom he had heard many strange tales in Calicut and Goa.

"Ha! you sabbee dat?" cried Ismail. "Sultan good man--glad see you. Yonder him island--Maleh."

The boys looked eagerly towards the island (now full in view), and recognized with unspeakable amazement the tall spar-pointed crag with the three palms on its summit, the clustering trees below, the thatched huts among them, the corn-fields and plantations, and all the features of that phantom islet which had vanished so strangely from their weary eyes on the memorable night of the storm.

CHAPTER X.—The Sultan of Twelve Thousand Isles.

On this occasion the visionary island proved solid enough, and their landing was like a triumphal procession.

So utterly unvisited are the Maldives, that even upon the principal islet there were many people who had never seen a "Faringi" before; and every one—men, women and children alike—crowded to stare at them as if (in Merritt's words) "they'd been Stanley and his men comin' back from finding Livingstone."

One slim, large-eyed boy of twelve or thirteen, who had pressed himself into the front rank of the crowd, said something very eagerly to Captain Ismail, at which the latter seemed greatly amused.

"What does he say?" asked Jake, who was beside the captain.

"He want know," exclaimed Ismail, "all white men small and no beard, same as you?"

"Well, tell him they're not, can't you?" cried Bob Harris, greatly scandalized. "A nice idea he'll have of Englishmen if he gets that into his head!"

"Well, I reckon it don't matter much," said Jake, philosophically. "Guess the existence of the British Empire isn't exactly based on the force o' public opinion in the Maldivian Isles."

"Prisidint," broke in O'Brien, "didn't you see what that in this Mohammedan country, the

ladies are all shut up and niver stir out but wid a veil over their faces? Troth, they saim to be walkin' about here for all the world like they do wid us at home!"

"Well, I dare say they're not so strict in these out-of-the-way places," said Merritt; "and they can't very well shut 'em up in houses that have no inside to them."

"I vondaire vat ze Sultan sall be like," cried Louis. "He sall hafe von big gold crown, is it not, and ze fine diamond all ovaire ze clothes?"

"Well, I calc'late you don't s'pose they manufacture sitch full-rigged kinds as them in a one-horse place like this," answered Jake, disdainfully. "More likely he'll be some dried-up old nigger with a bald head and a gray beard, and nothing on but an eyeglass and a pair of spurs, or a one-cent stamp and the rim of a saucepan!"

The path that led upward from the landing place now turned sharply to the left through a splendid palm grove, and came out upon a long, straggling street of native huts (with the usual wattled walls and palm-leaf thatch, giving them the look of huge bird's nests), which the boys rightly guessed to be the Maldivian capital.

Here the crowd was thicker than ever, and as they entered the "town," a tiny child which had been parted from its mother in the throng was knocked down close to their feet.

"Never mind chickabiddy—it's all right now!" said Bob Harris, picking it up, and stroking caressingly the poor little puckered face, which was just making itself up for a good cry.

The baby brightened at once, and Harris perched it on his shoulder, where it crowed and chirruped gleefully. But to honest Bob's no small dismay, it seemed so well satisfied with its new friend as to be in no hurry to leave him.

Then one wee brown arm around his neck, began to tug vigorously at his curly hair with the other, while the native lookers-on made the approach to laughing aloud of which an

just then one of Ismail's sailors, who had been with them at the landing-place, came hastily back, side by side with a tall man in a striped wrapper, who said a few words to Ismail.

"Sultan want make talkee wid you dis minute," explained the latter; "we go right dere."

The disordered group was instantly reformed, the baby (in its great relief) given back to its mother, and away went the procession up the street to a high palisade, in front of which another man in a striped wrapper, with a long black staff on his shoulder, was walking

"Ship-guns," said Merritt, "come ashore from some wreck, I guess. They don't amount to much now, though, by the look of 'em. If anybody touched 'em off, I reckon they'd be like the musker that killed three men at one shot, the man that fired it and the two stood to right and left."

A huge screen of matting slid back as they approached, admitting them to a large courtyard, at the end of which stood a queer-looking building not unlike a barn. On a mat in the shade of its wide veranda, with a dish of rice beside him, sat a short, fat, gray-bearded old man, wearing a little, saucer-shaped, green cap on his shaven head, and round his waist (tied by its sleeves) something that had once been a British soldier's red jacket, although its color was quite hidden now by grease and dirt.

Poor Louis' face was a picture when he saw by the low salaam of their attendants that this ugly old scarecrow was really the "Sultan of the Twelve Isles" himself.

"Peace be with you!" grunted the king, as the boys came forward, while their native companions fell back respectfully, all except Ismail, who was to act as interpreter.

"Peace be with the Sultan of Twelve Isles!" rejoined Merritt, rightly judging that this royal Tom Thumb would be pleased to find a foreigner so familiar with his title.

In fact, a greasy smile flickered over the old man's heavy face as he asked:

"Come ye from the setting sun, out of the land of Frangistan?" (Europe).

"Farther than that," answered Jake; "I come from a great country between two oceans bigger than all Frangistan put together."

The Sultan looked puzzled (as well he might, having never heard of America before), and asked a number of questions about this mysterious land, which Merritt answered as well as he could, though his replies, strained through Ismail's exceedingly free translation, made the old king's bushy eyebrows bristle with astonishment.

"Bism'illah!" cried he, "it is indeed a far-off land that lies beyond Frangistan! Doubtless it is one of those desert isles of the north, where even the name of the Prophet (may his praise be exalted) has never been heard."

"Hasn't it though!" cried Merritt, who had read Washington Irving's *Life of Mohammed* thrice before leaving school. "Why, one of our kessehgous (story-tellers) made a whole book about your Prophet, and what he said or did!"

"What?" exclaimed the Sultan, (unbeliever) write the acts of the Prophet!"

"Every one of 'em," replied Jake, confidently; "how he ran away from Mecca to Medina, and how he came back and took Mecca afterwards, and how he went up to heaven on a flying horse, and how he fought with Greeks and Jews and all sorts of fellows, and how they poisoned him at last with a leg of mutton—it's all there!"

Ismail listened in open-mouthed amazement, and the old king's eyes seemed to be starting out of his head.

"Mash' Allah!" (praise to God) said he; "even the uttermost isles of the sea have heard the deeds of the Prophet! Well hast thou spoken, O Faringhi, and the mouth that speaks well should be filled."

So saying, he squeezed some of his rice into a ball, and crammed it into Jake's mouth with fingers which looked as if they had not been washed for a month. Merritt, however, knew better than to refuse such a compliment, which all the others (though very unwillingly) endured in their turn. Then the king said a few words to Ismail in an undertone, and waved his hand to indicate that the interview was at an end.

The consequences of the Sultan's favor were soon apparent.

Our heroes were promptly supplied with everything which they required in the way of food or household utensils, and established in a house a little way from the throne, which had been left vacant by the banishment of a troublesome chief to one of the southern islands, the Silema of the Maldivé group.

"We'll call it the White House, bein' where the Prophet lives," cried Bob, as they sat at breakfast in the shade of the ample porch the morning after their interview with the King.

"Much obliged, sirree; you're awful polite," said Jake, bowing; "and it is a white house, sure enough, for it's most all coral. I s'pose that's the Maldivian idea of a brownstone front. Well, it was real nice of that chief to get himself banished just to make room for us."

"And the other is the Black House!" laughed Ismail, pointing upward to the grim, sea-line peaks of black rock towering the result of volcanic action, a general appearance which had been the first point of the island visible from the sea, and close to the foot of which they were now established.

"Now, I'll tell you what!" cried Merritt, "we'll call it 'Major General' Mayhap the old General'll be here when we git back, and I calc'late he'll be a sight better than the old General of the sea."

"Right you are," said Bob, heartily. "Well, it's

all gone off grandly, and no mistake. Everybody's friends with us, and we can just make ourselves snug here till the westerly winds set in, and then get these fellows to run us across to India in one of their trading boats."

Poor Bob! He quickly discovered that he was exulting too soon. The words were hardly spoken when a man was seen coming slowly up the path leading from the town, whose appearance struck Harris and Merritt as being somewhat familiar to them.

And well it might be; for the next glance showed them too plainly to be mistaken, the tall, gaunt figure and wolfish eyes of Shamo!

CHAPTER XI.—Mischief Brewing.

It was only by a superhuman effort that Bob and Jake managed to repress the start of recognition which would have betrayed them at once to the sharp, suspicious eyes of their dreaded enemy. But they stifled all sign of emotion, and forced themselves to assume the half-curious, half-indifferent look with which they might have watched the sudden approach of a total stranger.

As for the other three, it cost them no trouble to look unconcerned; for, having never seen him before, they were miles away from guessing that the man before them was the Dacoit who had invaded their island.

"Peace be with you," said Merritt, who, with all his cool courage, had dark work to keep his voice steady when he saw, as Shamo came up to them, the traces of his own hatchet-stroke in the broad bandage that covered the Hindoo's right shoulder.

"With you be peace," rejoined the Dacoit, in a tone which sounded very much as if he were wishing them all hanged instead.

"Come you to eat with us? You are welcome," pursued Jake, offering him some fish and bread-fruit, and purposely speaking the Malabar dialect (in which the invitation was uttered) as badly as possible.

"Your words are good; but I am not hungry," said Shamo, waving his hand, as if to put the food away from him. "Tell me, have you been lately in Bombay?"

"Two moons have set since we were there."

"Heard you anything of Shamo?"

"Of whom?" asked Merritt, with a puzzled look as if the name were quite new to him; "hau-mow?"

"Shamo," repeated the Hindoo, slowly and distinctly, "Shamo, the Dacoit."

All this while Jake had been in mortal terror lest one or other of the three who were not in the secret should betray them in some way; and when he heard the robber utter in their hearing with such distinctness his own dreaded name, which they all had such terrible reason to remember, even the brave Yankee boy felt his blood run cold.

But by good fortune the three younger boys had already ceased to pay attention to a conversation which they could not understand, taking it for granted that Jake would tell them by and by all about his talk with the Maldivian for such they took Shamo to be. The utterance of the formidable name passed quite unnoticed, and Merritt breathed freely once more.

"We heard nothing of any such man at Bombay," said he, in reply to Shamo's question; "indeed, we weren't allowed to go ashore once, all the time we were there."

This was quite true; for Jake had already made up his mind that no tricks could serve them against a practiced rogue like Shamo, and that their best plan was to be as straightforward as possible.

"It is fate," said the brigand with a well-feigned look of disappointment. "Gladly would I have heard that he was caught, for I narrowly escaped him once, and men say that he is cruel as a tiger. But, if it be his fate to escape once more, who can change kismet (destiny)? Peace be with you."

And the Dacoit sauntered away as leisurely as he had come.

Great was the amazement of Mike, Karl and Louis on learning who their visitor was; and they all asked eagerly what he had said.

"Well, he's given us a fair warning, anyhow," answered Merritt, after briefly detailing the conversation. "You saw he refused that food I offered him. Well, now a Maldivian would eat out of the same dish with you (like us and the king yesterday), he's bound to be your friend ever after; and if he won't eat with you, it's as much as to say, 'Look out for squalls, for I'll go for you the first chance I git.' So now we know what to expect."

"It is to me," observed Harris, thoughtfully, "like fishing that way to find out how much we know about him, that these Maldivian chaps can't know who he really is; for, if they did, it wouldn't make any difference whether we knew or not; but if they didn't, he'd want to be sure there was no risk of our telling 'em."

And after this all seemed to be going on as usual, although the boys were still a little

whenever they met him, gave no sign of active mischief; and all the rest were as friendly as they could be. Louis quite won the king's heart by cooking two or three savory French dishes for him, over which the old glutton smacked his royal lips in a very unkindly style.

Some of the native customs amazed our friends a little. Strolling through the town one day, they found their friend Ismail chopping wood vigorously under the direction of another native, who explained that Ismail, being unable to pay a debt which he owed, was his slave by Maldivian law until the debt had been worked out.

One of the first undertakings of our adventurers, as might have been expected, was to ascend Mount Grant, in the rocky face of which they discovered a rudely-cut stair. But, just as they were beginning to climb it, they were stopped by a terrible outcry from Ismail, who, passing at that moment, came rushing up to warn them that the people would certainly kill any Christian that dared to approach the tomb of a famous Mohammedan saint who was buried on the summit.

But, although the boys made a show of desisting, they only waited for the first moonless night to try again, getting right to the top this time. The tomb, which was protected from the sun and rain by a small wooden roof supported upon four stout posts, lay in a hollow between two over-arching rocks, shaded by the three palm trees already mentioned; and the stair which led up to it, notched as it was in the face of the precipice, was so steep and narrow that one man might have held it against an army.

The next day the boys asked Ismail whether there were any more "forbidden places," and he told them (luckily without noticing the conscious looks which they exchanged while he was speaking) that there was an islet not far to the north of Maleh, where a mysterious sickness had suddenly swept off most of the inhabitants. The few who were left had fled from the islet, which was thenceforth pronounced "unlucky;" and the Sultan had solemnly proclaimed that any one landing upon it thenceforth should at once be put to death.

"Guess we cl'ared out none too soon," observed Jake, when Ismail had gone. "It 'ud be a bully idea to get rid of that skunk Shamo by havin' him put to death for landin' there; but we can't do that without lettin' on that we landed there, too; so we'd best let it be."

On the whole, however, the lads led a very jolly life in their new quarters, despite the dim forebodings of evil which never wholly left them. Bob and Jake got as much shooting and fishing as they

liked. O'Brien learned some tricks of swimming and diving from the native boys which, as he said, "would make an oyster stare." Karl Hogmann, with his musical voice and his inexhaustible stock of songs, became quite a "lion" at the evening parties of the Maldivians, who seemed to enjoy his performance not a whit the less because they could not understand a word of it.

But this bright holiday life was only the calm before the storm, and although they had encountered many perils, that which was just about to burst upon them was the deadliest of all.

CHAPTER XII.—In the Dead of Night.

One day the boy heard by chance that the Sultan was ill. Bob remarked carelessly that "if he always overrated himself like that, it was a wonder that he hadn't been ill before;" and then they thought no more about it.

But, little by little, disquieting signs began to show themselves. The King did not get better, and it was whispered that his illness seemed likely to be serious, and that his only son, Prince Tiru, was to be sent for from one of the smaller islands, whither he had gone on a visit.

He came; and the five boys, who had mixed with the crowd that gathered to see him land, from the very first glimpse of his sullen, frowning face, that he would be a very different man to deal with from his lazy good-humored, easy-going father.

From that hour of his coming, everything around them seemed to darken slowly, and nothing special happened of which they could say, "This is what we are expecting;" but all the change was there, and it grew stronger and more marked every day.

When they went through the village, their old chums, who used to meet them with hearty greetings, answered their salutations with a few muttered words, and went hurrying by. If they came up to a group of talkers, there was a sudden silence, and every one looked at them with a frown. Ismail himself, though still friendly, spoke to them without glancing uneasily.

after they had thrice encountered Prince Tiru in earnest talk with Shamo.

The boys began to feel downcast and miserable. Any open danger they would have faced fearlessly enough; but this unseen horror, which seemed to be nowhere and yet everywhere, creeping up around them, and closing them in like an iron net, tried even their strong nerves too hard.

"That rascally Dacoit suspects us still, I can see that," said Bob; "and for fear we should let out about his being here when we get to India, he's stirring up the people to kill us. It's lucky we've plenty of friends among them still."

But even this hope was soon to be taken from them. Two days later a great stir and bustle drew them to the landing-place, where they found a number of boats being manned and prepared for sailing under the eye of Prince Tiru himself, beside whom stood Shamo.

This was the outset of the "buying voyage," which is to the Maldivians what the sailing of an East India fleet was to the Dutch two centuries ago. The Maldiv Islands (like the Laccadives further north) consists of a number of natural folds or "corrals," each formed by a circular reef enclosing six or seven islets. One of these atolls (as the natives call them) is inhabited by carpenters, another by potters, a third by mat makers, and so on; and shortly before the setting in of the stormy season of westerly gales the islanders make a kind of marine shopping expedition, going in their boats from group to group to buy what they want, laying in supplies for the whole season, and timing themselves so as to get back just before the first storm, which is always a severe one.

Bob and Jake saw, with secret dismay, that among those that were thus preparing to start on a cruise of several weeks were nearly all their personal friends, including Ismail himself, who stole a pitying glance at them both, although he carefully avoided approaching them. But as he went down to his boat he contrived to pass near enough to whisper:

"You steal boat, go 'way quick, or Prince kill you. He say you bewitch Sultan!"

As a lightning flash reveals a precipice, this one sentence showed to the doomed lads the full extent of their danger. They knew that no tale was too wild and monstrous to be relieved by the superstitious and fanatical natives of Southern Asia; and the fact of the King's illness having followed so closely upon their arrival, and of Ismail having just said that they were bewitched, was enough to convince them that they were in a very real and deadly danger.

With a gasp they turned to look at each other.

ris; "take a boat the first dark night, and be off again."

It was a desperate plan, but it seemed to be the only one possible; and that very night they began to carry it out. But they were forced to wait so long for the moon to set, that the dawn was upon them long before their work was done, and they had to defer till the next night the final retreat into their tower of refuge, knowing well that they had no chance of reaching it unmolested in the daytime.

That day was the longest which they had ever passed. They all knew well that the Sultan might die at any moment, and that (the friends who might have protected them being now far away) his death would be the signal for their own. Thinking it wisest to let themselves be seen as little as possible by the excited Mohammedans, they remained in the house all day, listening to the distant uproar of shouts and yells, the beating of native drums, and the long, shrill notes of those huge, twisted shells which serve the Maldivians as trumpets.

Night came at last, and the clamor in the village seemed only to grow louder, while a broad glow of torchlight around the dying King's house revealed a swarm of wild figures eddying ceaselessly to and fro. But, to Merritt's great relief, the moon did not show itself, and the night was intensely, almost unnaturally dark. Instead of being cool, too, as it usually is in the Maldivian Isles, it was strangely hot and close. Not a breath of wind was stirring, and the great banner-like leaves of the plantains and cocoa palms lay lifelessly on the thick, heavy, breezeless air.

"Now!" said Jake, in a stern whisper.

Silently as shadows, the daring lads crept to the foot of the rock. To scale it in utter darkness, even as they were, was a perilous task; but they accomplished it at length, came down again for their last load, and then clambered once more to the summit of the precipice.

Scarcely had they reached it, when the dreary silence which had suddenly fallen upon the town was broken by a deep booming report far below.

"The King's dead!" said Merritt, solemnly. "Now, boys, we must just set our backs to the wall and see it through, for they'll show us no more mercy."

CHAPTER XIII.—The Harvest of Death.

The sound of the signal gun was answered by a wild howl from hundreds of throats at once, as harsh and savage as the cry of hungry wolves in

full sight of their prey. Then the torches were seen moving swiftly toward the house which our heroes had just quitted; and then there came a momentary silence, followed by another yell louder and fiercer than the last.

"They'll soon find out where we've gone," said Merritt, "by the footprints leadin' to the rock."

He had hardly spoken when an uproar from below, to which all the previous clamor was as nothing, showed that he was right. The mere thought that the "Faringhi unbelievers" were upon the sacred rock, profaning with their unholy feet the tomb of a Mohammedan saint, perfectly maddened the excitable islanders and the presence of Shamo—whose deep voice was plainly heard amid the tumult—was hardly needed to hound them on to vengeance.

The Dacoit held a short consultation with Prince Tiru, after which they divided their men into bands, and posted them in the thickets on either side of the rock, with orders to annoy the besieged party by shouting and firing a few shots every now and then, so as to make them believe that the attack was just about to begin.

Meanwhile the defenders had not been idle. To save their ammunition, they had piled a number of large stones in readiness at the edge of the platform, which, hung from such a height down the steep narrow stair that was the only approach, would be quite as deadly as a bullet. They had stowed their provisions and water safely under the plank awning of the tomb, and had made fast their flag to one of the three overshadowing palm trees, to be ready when the wind should rise sufficiently to spread it.

Slowly the long weary hours wore on as they lay crouching there in the darkness, hemmed in by merciless enemies, with every nerve strained as if on the rack.

But at last a faint gleam of light broke the blackness of the eastern sky, while at the same time the lifeless air was stirred as if by a rising wind.

The assailants began to bestir themselves the moment they had light enough to see what they were about. While Prince Tiru's ambushed marksmen sent a constant hail of bullets against the summit of Mount Grant, Shamo, followed by a picked band of the boldest and most active islanders, began to mount the rock-cut stair, confident that the boys could not step forward to fire at them without being discovered by the sharpshooters below.

And now the defenders of the fortress began to show signs of weakness. The stones which they flung down fell with a terrific crash, but so

CURRENT NEWS

A ONE-TON COW

A Holstein cow owned by the University of Idaho is the first cow in that State to weigh more than a ton, topping the scales at 2,015 pounds just before freshening. She produced more than twenty tons of milk in the year, the exact figure being 40,995.7 pounds.

BOY PRISONER SWIMS RIVER

Abraham Katz, seventeen, of No. 327 East Eighth Street, New York, escaped from the House of Refuge, Randall's Island, the other afternoon, swam across the East River and climbed to a pier at 116th Street. A taxicab chauffeur found him shivering on the wharf and notified Patrolman Sammons, who called an ambulance from Harlem Hospital.

After he had been attended for immersion and his clothing was dried, Katz was taken back to the institution by Chief Parole Officer Helbring. The officials of the institution refused to tell how Katz eluded the guards.

FOR FRESH DATES

Some soil in desert oases has not sufficient heat to mature dates. This is due to unusual radiation, depending upon local conditions. A way has been found to mature the fruit artificially, however, and being simple and inexpensive, it is likely to be put to practical use. A metal oven is used of the same temperature as the soil under the most favorable conditions. Here the dates are kept for three days. At the end of this time the fruit is sweet and aromatic. It is predicted that this will do away with the dried and pressed dates with which we are all familiar, as this system restores the freshness to fruit which has been too long upon the trees in the sunlight, the artificial humidity insuring juiciness and flavor. It is expected also that ultimately fruit may be exported in these ovens to long distances, although in that case a man would have to be delegated to attend the oven to register its temperature and to see that the fruit did not remain too long in it.

LOOK BOYS, LOOK!

Did you know that "Mystery Magazine" now contains more stories than it ever did? And they are crackerjacks!

Just to show you, read this list of contents for No. 156, on all newsstands:

"THE MEDICINE DROPPER"

A detective novelette by G. P. WILSON

"WITH EYES AND NOSE"

A two-part story by RALPH E. DYAR

"WHAT DOES YOUR HANDWRITING TELL?"

A special article by LOUISE RICE

TRAPS FOR THE UNWARY"

An article by POLICE-CAPTAIN HOWARD

AND THESE STORIES AND ARTICLES:

"STICK TO YOUR PRISONER," by Jack Bechdolt; "THE STRING," by Crittenden Marriott; "THE SHADE'S MYSTERY," by Dr. W. J. Campbell; "TRAPPED BY CHANCE," by Joe Burke; "THE CAGE," by Hamilton Craig; "THE CRIME DETECTOR," "ROBBERIES INCREASE INSURANCE RATES," "TRUTH SERUM," "MENTAL CURE FAKERS," "FIND ALLEGED SWINDLER," "JAIL PRISONERS GET NARCOTICS," "THE METHODS OF SCOTLAND YARD" and "SECRET SERVICE WARNS OF COUNTERFEITS."

The Biggest 15 Cents' Worth on Earth!

GET A COPY!

Breaking The Record

—OR—

AROUND THE WORLD IN THIRTY-THREE DAYS

By WILLIAM WADE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER XX.—(Continued).

"No, thanks," said Dick, puzzled at the man's coolness, and hardly knowing what to make of it.

"That's all right. You don't mind my taking something?"

"Not at all if you feel like it."

"Billy Renton is a sly fellow," said Ildone. "I happen to know all about his schemes, however. I wonder if he went back the way he came. You have seen nothing of Philpot, I suppose? Guess he did not care to take this trip."

"I don't care anything about Philpot," muttered Dick, angrily. "He's a fool, and Billy Renton is a knave. You heard about Foxy Wilmot before you left home? He was a rascal, I believe."

"Yes; so he was," echoed Ildone, putting the tall glass which the porter had just brought to his lips and taking a long draught. "Quite a rascal. He is better off dead, or the world is, at any rate."

"Have you any idea who killed him?" asked Dick suddenly, hoping to surprise the man into an admission of guilt or at any rate to embarrass him and make him show signs of it.

"Why, I don't know that I do," returned the man in a careless tone. "Have you any idea yourself? He had a good many enemies and no friends that I ever heard of. He was a great rascal, as you say. Have you formed any idea of how it happened? How did you hear of it?"

"Why, it was at the dinner we attended, or after it—Mrs. Gilchrist's, you know. I was called in to shift a ladder. She was afraid there would be a fall-out at table."

"Oh, is that so?" laughed the other. "I thought you were there as a detective. Old lady was full of gossip and all that, and it was better to have a detective disguised as a guest than to appear in his own person. Had any case, Dick?"

"I wonder if he is putting me through the third degree to see what I know?" thought the young fellow. "He's the coolest hand I ever saw. I don't say anything, but I'll watch him just the same. If he leaves the train now, I'll wire all over the country. I believe he is putting on a big bluff, but I'll call it later."

As there was no chance of their stopping for some time, Dick left the car and went back to his friends, finding Mark enjoying a smoke and wondering what had become of him.

"I've found him, Mark," Dick said, as he sat down. "He's on this train, in the smoking car."

"You don't get on, Dick!"

"I don't know, but he's here all right. He was

disguised. I believe he has been here since we started. He is a cool case. Actually asked me if I had any idea who killed Foxy Wilmot. Did you ever hear anything like that, Mark? The fellow is a wonder?"

"Show any signs of guilt, Dick?" asked Mark, puffing away at his cigar. "You know I told you I was not sure that he did it."

"No, he did not; but he's a cool hand all the same, and perhaps did that to bluff me. He would have a good reason. Asked me about Trix and said Potiphar was a fool."

There was no stops before Dick went to bed, and at last at a late hour he turned in and slept till morning, nothing awaking him.

Just before breakfast he saw the porter of the other car, and asked if Ildone had made any attempt to leave the train.

"No, sah," said the porter, grinning, "but den we didn't stop no place."

CHAPTER XXI.

Dick Receives Several Surprises.

Dick was forced to laugh at the trick the negro porter had played him, but gave the fellow another dollar, and said:

"See that he does not get away, George. It's particular. I have an especial reason for having him to go all the way to New York."

"A'right, sah; Ah see dat he do," and the man grinned and went back to his work.

Mark Topping had been studying time-tables, and at breakfast, when they were all together, he said, with a satisfied air:

"We are going some, Dick, and I don't doubt that we shall get in on Thursday morning some time. That's all right. We'll make it in thirty-three days and some hours, anyhow, and we may do it in thirty-three and no hours. A few won't make any difference so long as we don't run to half a day or more over. Three or four will be all the same."

"You don't catch me going on another such trip, no matter whether we break the record or not," declared Dick.

"Not with the same companions, Mr. Dodge?" asked Aunt Tryphena, with a most bewitching smile.

"Some of them, perhaps," returned Dick, absently.

"Oh, thank you, that is well put in. You mean me, of course, but I am not saying anything; no, I am not saying anything."

"It seems to me you are saying a lot, aunty," laughed Mark. "We'll go faster after we get to Chicago, but we have been going some already," referring to his time-table. "We might be the mail the way we have dashed through the country."

"It will be all right if we don't meet with any accident," muttered Dick, "but I don't like these fast trains. You never know what is going to happen to them."

"You speak very encouragingly, Mr. Dodge," laughed Trix, and at that moment there was a rumble and then the train seemed to go faster than before.

(To be continued.)

ACROSS THE CONTINENT

FINDS BEGGAR ASLEEP IN A ROYAL APARTMENT

The Countess, who is well known in Washington, Mexico City and Santiago, Chile, received congratulations from her friends for causing the death of the man.

A colored rock, light blue and a moderate long-haired insect are the only insects. The soil, however, is often sandy and above the ground, no commercial matter is supposed to reach the surface. Most of the grain, however, is produced out of ground within very week. A day's work for a smaller amount 20 to 30 bushels.

The page is numbered 100 at the bottom.

Hollow concrete tile blocks will be made at Panama, and the canal commission has arranged for the erection of a plant for their manufacture. Most of the buildings in the new town of Balboa will probably be constructed of these blocks.

100 West 23d Street New York

INTERESTING RADIO NEWS AND HINTS

MODULATION TRANSFORMER

The microphone used for transmission in continuous wave radio telephony is generally connected to the oscillating system through the modulation transformer, which allows the continuous wave to be properly varied at voice frequencies.

MAGNIFIED SOUND

It is reported that science has found a way to make a pin drop sound like a crash. Dr. J. T. Roberts, giving a practical demonstration along with his lecture on "The Wonders of Wireless" at the Westminster Central Hall, London, used amplifiers and magnified the sound of a pin dropping to the floor so that it sounded like a crowbar striking the floor. Salt poured on the floor sounded like boulders falling.

A GOOD TESTER

Here is the easiest way to tell the positive from the negative binding post of a storage battery:

If a polarity indicator is not handy the polarity may be determined by placing the wires from the terminals of the battery in a glass of salt water. The wires should not be too close together. Bubbles will gather at the negative wire under the surface of the water.

A HOOK UP

This is the way to hook up a crystal set, using a variometer, variocoupler and a variable condenser.

The switch arms of the coupler primary should be connected in series with the aerial and ground. The variometer is connected in series with the secondary of the variocoupler and the variable condenser so that it is in shunt across both of them. The crystal and phone condenser form the detecting circuit which are in series, and then connected to the terminals of the variable condenser. The telephones are connected across the terminals of the phone condenser. The condenser need not have a high capacity; .00025 mfd. being large enough.

BALL TYPE VARIOMETER

This is a ball shaped tuning apparatus consisting of a fixed or stationary outer winding and a concentrically mounted inner movable winding. The two windings are connected in series and may be mounted on molded insulation or on a wooden base. They are usually wound with the same number of turns of the same wire. Variometers are made with sufficient winding to cover a wave length of from 150 to 600 meters using the average antenna. The variometer is well adapted as a tuning device for receiving circuits. By placing it in series in the antenna circuit and revolving the ball so that the inductance of the winding can be varied at will. The variometer may also be used as a fixed coupled tuning circuit. It has been used in this manner for the purpose of connecting the aerial with the ground when a variable con-

denser and the crystal detector are shunted around it. This circuit is well adapted for short wave work.

WIRE FOR COILS

Three governing factors in the selection of wire for coils are resistance, insulation and surface. If the wire is too small, resistance will impede the current flow. High-frequency currents travel over the surface of a conductor and not within it. The greater the surface the easier it is for the currents to pass. No. 18 and No. 22 wire are generally recommended for use as primary coils because of their surface and low resistance. No. 24 and No. 26 wire serve well as secondary windings.

Theoretically, stranded wire, such as Litzen-draht, is more suitable than solid wire, but the difference in the results in receiving broadcasting stations does not warrant the additional expense. Litzendraht is to be recommended for loop antennae and coils for high wave length reception because of its larger surface.

Single cotton covered, silk covered or enameled wire works well for windings of the ordinary coils. Double covered wire should be used for spiderweb and honey-comb coils and bank windings. Defects in thin insulation when it is stretched and twisted in the winding process are likely to cause short circuits. Shellac should not be used to cover the windings as a protection from moisture. Paint or dip the coils in colodion. Shellac increases the capacity effect.

VARIOMETERS AND VARIABLE CONDENSERS

A variometer is a tuning device similar in many ways to the variocoupler, but differing from it in the relation of outer and inner coils, which are connected to form a continuous wire. The variometer finds its greatest application in the two variometer and coupler feedback set. The variometer consists of a set of fixed windings and a set of movable windings, the latter being rotated on an axis in the usual fashion. This instrument varies the inductance and therefore the wave length of any circuit in which it is used.

When coils are tuned so that the currents flow in both coils in opposite directions the coils buck each other and the inductance and wave length at a minimum.

A variable condenser across the secondary of the variocoupler of a receiver serves to add capacity to the circuit and permits a finer degree of tuning in the secondary circuit than could be obtained merely by varying the value of the inductance of the coupling.

A buzzer of the ordinary house type with battery connected in series with the condenser may be used. If any part of the condenser is shorted, the buzzer will buzz as long as the circuit is closed. This means that the position of the condenser is indicated at every point.

TUNING COILS

Beginning with the simplest ones and working up to and including the best types, coils are: Single slide, double slide, loose coupler, variocoupler, variometer, honeycomb, duo lateral and some special types, depending upon the circuit employed.

The single slide tuning coil consists of a cardboard tube measuring four inches in diameter wound with fifty turns of No. 22 wire spaced $\frac{1}{2}$ inch apart. One end of the coil is connected to the aerial and the other end to the ground. The slider, a contact that slides across the surface of the wires on a path scraped bare though the insulation is connected to the detector and the lower end of the coil. Connect the other end of the detector to the ground wire.

To tune a set having a loose coupler as tuning device set the coupling as tight as possible and tune in the desired signal with the primary coil. After this has been done tune in with the secondary or inner coil until the greatest signal has been reached. An attempt now can be made to loosen the coupling somewhat until the signals are just audible. Retune the set with the primary coil or taps until the loudest signal has been heard with the present setting or coupling. This will bring in less interference from neighboring stations.

The set must be adjusted to be in resonance with the transmitter so that the wave lengths of both stations are the same. In order to change the characteristics of a receiver to pick up respective wave lengths a system of tuning must be operated at each receiver.

A tuning coil is a length of copper wire wound around an insulated tube made either with pasteboard, bakelite, mormica, hard rubber or fiber. The wire used is generally copper. The length of the wire depends on the number of turns required and the diameter of the coil.

RECEIVING SET CAN BE ALTERED

To cater to the whims of the radio experimenter and his eternal seeking after new circuits and combinations of circuits, a well-known manufacturer has developed an outfit with parts so arranged that the connections may be instantly changed from one arrangement to another.

The heart of the transmitter is an all-wave tuner designed with a sufficient number of turns of wire to reach any wave from 150 to 1,000 meters. It is possible to tune in stations with wavelengths of 150 to 200 meters, and stations with wavelengths of 450 to 1,000 meters. The circuit is designed to receive stations with frequencies equivalent to wave lengths between 450 and 1,000 metres.

To construct a set of this type the following are necessary: An all-wave coupler, a plate variable condenser, socket and rheostat, plate terminals, connecting wire and binding

It is an old but useful maxim that a single thing cannot be the cause of two different effects. From this axiom it follows that they be two different things, either entirely distinct, or differing only by the addition of a two-fold

amplifier it can be made into a loud speaking set. Furthermore, it may be changed to any number of known circuits as well as enabling the "experimenter" to try any new circuit that he may conceive by merely making the changes at the top of the inside panel. No soldering iron or tools of any kind are required.

The "terminals," which simplify the interchange of connections, are binding posts. By shifting the "jumpers," which are merely loops of wire of varying lengths, from one set of terminals to another the functions of the circuits may be altered at will.

LACK OF APPLAUSE IN RADIO

The scanty article which is proving more than performers can stand is applause.

If an artist exhibited his or her ability over the microphone in 1922 the mails and telegraph lines were crowded with fervent pronouncements of appreciation from all points of the globe within 1,000 miles from the station. The artists felt that the applause, while not spontaneous, was nevertheless genuine and represented the real feelings of the listeners.

Now there is keener competition between the leading broadcast stations and the fans seem to sense the fact. Instead of showing their appreciation in some material form such as by phone calls or letters they merely assume that some one else will perform the courtesy. In former times it was said that the appearance of certain individuals or the program seemed to be the signal for an avalanche of mail, the letters sometimes aggregating 1,000 or more within twenty-four hours. Nowadays the artist considers himself or herself fortunate if the response reached a total of 100.

Added to this reluctance on the part of the audience is the reaction of some of the organizations with which artists are affiliated. While the financial requirements of these organizations cannot be controlled, these organizations are frowning on the appearance of the members on the radio programs without payment for their services. Just how far this indirect consorship will affect the program is not known, but it is generally understood that many of the artists care more for the widespread publicity which they receive than for the financial recompense which might be there.

As an artificial stimulation some enterprising firms have devised applause cards with sentiments expressed in blank form. It was hoped that listeners having a supply of these cards would be happy to fill them in the home, and mail them to the broadcast station, thus increasing the number of cards received. The system of blanketing, however, seems to have failed. Unless the mailing of a card is accompanied by the cash the cards are as good as the usual newspaper subscription card. The point is, the lack of immediate cash change for the card is the cause of the failure.

Just when the general idea has been accepted by any of these two bodies the program is often more or less modified or there are attempts to perform without it. The authors would like to see the program, too, because it would make the organization of programs easier.

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, APRIL 30, 1924

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

FIND SKULL OF RACE ANTEDATING INDIANS

Excavators employed by a construction concern several days ago unearthed a human skull near Los Angeles, Cal., which visiting paleontologists, including Dr. J. C. Merriam, President of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, said they believed to be a relic of a race older than either the Neanderthal or the Piltown man.

The skull is said by scientists who examined it to be different in appearance from the skulls of the typical aborigine of North America, examples of which have recently been found in Southern California. It is not of the Indian type. It was found in glacial sands beneath pleistocene clay strata, in the valley which a few years ago gave up fragments of the skeletons of the giant sloth and the saber-toothed tiger.

The skull in being removed was broken into fragments, but these have been pieced together.

ATLANTIC CITY LIFTS BAN ON 1-PIECE BATHING SUIT

Though bare legs were banned for women in Atlantic City last summer, Mayor Ed. L. Bader officially announced that during bathing season complete equality of the sexes prevail on the beaches of this resort. Use

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ABOUT CINNAMON

The finest cinnamon bark is produced in Ceylon, where the Portuguese found the tree growing wild when they arrived in the island in 1505, says the *Bulletin* of the Imperial Institute. Since that date Ceylon has been famed for this spice, but owing to the small financial return it gives to the growers, much of the area under cinnamon in the island has been replaced by the more profitable coconut and rubber. Ceylon cinnamon, moreover, has had to compete, particularly in the Continental markets, with a cheaper product of coarser flavor from the Far East. Cinnamon bark reaches us in two forms: the ordinary, "quills," used as spice, and "chips," which are distilled for the production of cinnamon oil used in medicine. The leaves of the cinnamon tree yield an entirely different oil from that of the bark; this oil contains eugenol (the characteristic constituent of oil of cloves) which is employed in the manufacture of vanillin, the well-known flavoring agent. Cinnamon-leaf oil is produced largely in the Seychelles, in addition to the Ceylon crop.

LAUGHS

"Our cook gives us the same thing at every meal." "What does she give you?" "Indigestion."

Photographer—Look pleasant, please. Victim—I guess you'll have to move that "Terms Cash" sign.

She—Do you like me for myself alone? He—Yes, and when we are married I don't want any of the family thrown in.

Mr. Gayman (laying the paper aside)—Well, there's no fool like an old fool. Mrs. Gayman—what particular folly are you meditating now?

Applicant—I see you advertised for a floor-walker, sir. Manager—Yes. Have you any experience in that line? Applicant—Two pairs of twins, sir.

Facetious Traveler (poking his head out of the car window)—What place is this? Native (leaning against the depot)—Paradise, Kaintucky, suh. Facetious Traveler—It is, eh? Well, this is how far from where? Native—Half a mile from the distillery, suh.

Little 'Rastus came home from school one day and asked his daddy, "Daddy, what does D. C. after Washington?" "Why, chile," answered the old colored man, "I's surprised at yer ignorance. Doan yer know dat D. C. means dat Washington wuz de daddy ob his country?"

Once a young Canadian consulted an oculist about his eyes. The oculist, after examining them, said: "Your eyes are all right, but you must be careful not to get them too close to the paper when you read." "You are right," said the young man, "but I don't know how to do that." "Well," said the oculist, "I can't help you, but I can tell you that if you don't get your eyes too close to the paper, you won't get any more headaches."

The toad is not an attractive animal and it has always been the object of curious beliefs or superstitions. Small boys believe that if one is killed and turned on its back there will be rain before night. For ages the general public has held to the belief that warts were produced by breathing toads. Other traditions credit the toad with the power of poisoning infants with its breath; of bringing good fortune to the house in the new-made cellar of which one is found; of curing infants of stammering if rubbed on the back of the neck; and of causing a cow to dry or give bloody milk if she accidentally kills a toad while being driven home from pasture. The works of the early writers on natural history teem with vague unsubstantiated accounts of the venomous qualities of the breath and sputum of the toad, the medical value of toad skins for treating ailments, and the valuable toadstone found in its

The real "back-biter" of the sea is the Ray, which is not nearly as pleasant an individual as its name might indicate.

The Ray is a deep sea monster and it moves slowly along the muddy channels of the sea. It is easily hidden because of the marvelous color adaptation it has developed with regard to its surroundings. But once let this creature be attacked by an enemy, or let the Ray itself decide to go out on its own account for a victim, then the doom of death will fall upon the poor unsuspecting sea citizen that gets in its way.

This sword or dagger is carried by the Ray at the end of its whip-like tail and when infuriated this monster fish will lash this tail in all directions, wreaking death on all who come within its radius.

The "dagger" Rays are strange, but the electric Rays are even stranger. These fish can stun a man with an electric shock. It can not only stun its enemies, but kill them as well, for it has developed from its muscles electric cells. It can perform the functions which are performed by an electric spark, such as decompose water and chemical compounds. This fish is capable of producing an electric spark. A man will be sick for days following if he has been stunned by one of these fishes and if he completes the circuit by touching the fish with both hands he will be killed.

It is maintained by experts in marine navigation that the monsters of the sea are far larger and more dangerous to hunt than are the monsters of the land. This seems not so surprising when it is considered that on land man and his inventions of slaughter for animals have been aiding in the extermination of dangerous animals, whereas in the sea there is no mechanical or artificial device greatly developed to kill off the dangerous inhabitants.

From time to time the immense body of some sea monster is found floating on the surface of the sea or is discovered water-logged on some beach, and then men have been known to say: "The monster is dead." But the great gods of Nature are almost sure to have left some of the monster's bones to rot on the beach.

Equipped with every device to combat the dangers of travel in the Valley of the Amazon, a band of ornithologists recently sailed from Brazil on the *Brazilian Steamship* in quest of the hoatzin, a rare bird of the Amazon.

The hoatzin is a bird with a bill capable of breaking stone. It also swims and is able to lose its bird identity, as the bat does.

Leading the expedition, which is independently financed, are R. M. Deschuenessee, son of the Baroness Deschuenessee, of Philadelphia, an ornithologist; George Conant, motion picture photographer, and Prof. Joseph McGoldrick and Henry Norris, of the University of Pennsylvania.

The boat, which was chartered from the Booth Steamship Company, is equipped with radio, and is well equipped for the trip. It will dock at Para, and proceed up the Amazon to Manaus, which was the home of Roosevelt's jumping-off place when he hunted in South America for big game.

I hope these adventures will penetrate
 a little deeper than by white men.

They had then go overland through country
populated by half-civilized tribes and they took
the Porcupine Indian, changing into that country
at Omaha. They expect to capture there the
last of the summer.

"I know, and the poor fellow must feel just about nothing as to all this trouble, but I want to say something for the first, that it is not all its fault. True, his ignorance, the accident, his own fault, because he had to depend on an ignorant man, and the man who told him.

It is generally thought that this bird was a common species. The bull bird can be heard for three miles, and is just as much to blame as the other species.

Government says that businesses are violating the law, that they are neglecting the bank's deposit funds.

PLUCK AND LUCK

ITEMS OF INTEREST

BURIED TO EYES IN SAND, WORKER DEMANDS SMOKE

Buried to his eyes by sand when the walls of a ditch caved in, Michael McGee, laborer on a plumbing job at 165 Sherbrooke avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y., smoked cigarettes and joked while firemen worked four hours to dig him out. The ditch was eight feet deep and only the top of McGee's head was visible when workmen started to remove the sand. When he cleared his mouth of sand McGee demanded a cigarette.

"Take me out in once piece," he asked of the workmen.

Freed from the sand he was attended by a physician, after which he said he would be back at work in the same ditch.

MAKES NEW KIND OF GLASS

A new kind of glass, which, if not actually unbreakable, is so tough that it has been blown into a hollow sphere and kicked about as a football without breaking, has been discovered by Dr. Horak, a Czech engineer and inventor.

When used in the form of tumblers the glass has successfully withstood the squirt of cold water immediately after being heated to a point where pieces of paper in the tumbler were charred. While the inventor does not claim that he has found the secret of unbreakable glass, he does believe he has found a way to make it possess the greatest resistance power of any glass so far known. It is admirably suited to the making of thermos bottles, which in so many cases have been too fragile.—Scientific American.

CANNED MILK INVENTOR, DEAD, WORTH MILLIONS

The romance of opportunity never has had a more striking example than in the case of Louis F. Latzer, President of the Helvetia Milk Condensing Company, whose funeral was held recently at Highland, Ill.

Latzer, son of a poor Tyrolese immigrant who arrived in Highland in 1845, was born Dec. 1, 1846, at the farm where he dropped dead.

Until four or five years ago he was a poor man. He had made between \$12,000 and \$20,000. And he made it all himself.

In 1881, when he had just turned 35, he was a poor man. He had made between \$12,000 and \$20,000. And he made it all himself.

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In 1881, when he had just turned 35, he was a poor man. He had made between \$12,000 and \$20,000. And he made it all himself.

That same stock is now unobtainable at \$20,000 a share. The last transaction in it was last October, when Mrs. Louisa Wild, widow of one of the founders, sold her 176 shares to other stockholders for \$3,520,000. For years it has paid annual dividends of \$1,000 or more a share.

Latzer's wealth did not change him. His family rode in automobiles, but he always took his trips of short distance on horseback, trousers tucked into old-fashioned boots. His office furniture consisted of three solid wood kitchen chairs, a pine table and a rack of pigeon-holes.

ASTHMA

TREATMENT mailed on FREE TRIAL. If it cures, send \$1; if not, it's FREE. Write for your treatment today. W. A. BROWN, Ltd., 511 Ohio Ave., Sydney, U.S.

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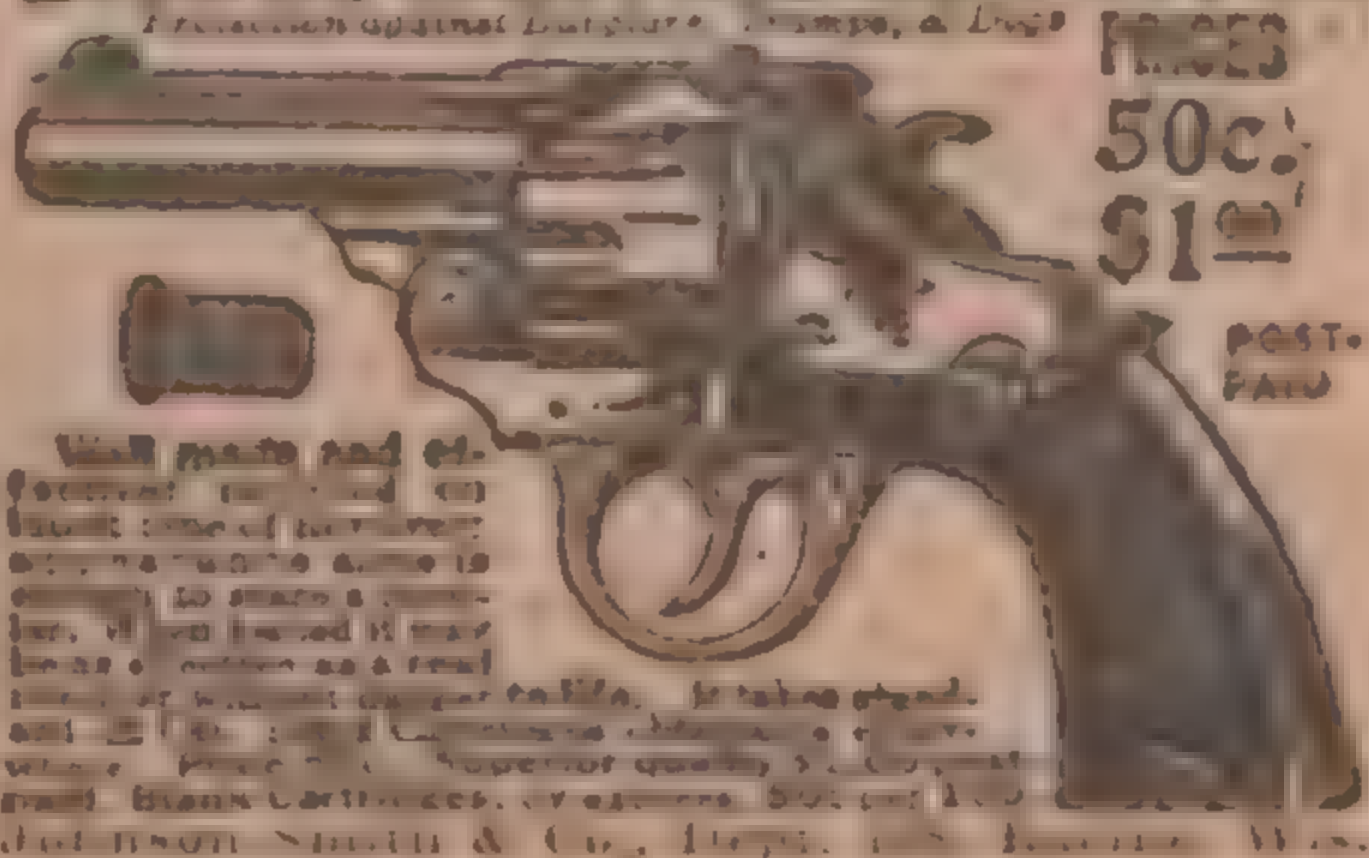
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GULLED

A sea gull with a splinter of wood at least six inches long that had entered the breast and was protruding through the back between the wings, was the startling spectacle that greeted a crowd of visitors on the Pine avenue pier, Los Angeles, Cal. A physician who was among the spectators declared it to be a novelty among novelties in bird life, for the wound caused by the shaft of wood had been apparently healed and the splinter had become a permanent part of the gull's anatomy.

The bird was captured for examination and the physician expressed the opinion that the sea gull would probably die from blood poisoning if an attempt were made to remove the wooden shaft. It is probable, old timers on the pier declared, that the gull, a clumsy, awkward bird, had collided with a splintered board while attempting to land on some old pier or shed along the water front and, after being wounded, had stowed itself away to nurse its injuries.

The wooden splinter does not apparently interfere with the sea gull's flying apparatus.

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